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# A VAGABOND IN SOVIETLAND

## BOOKS BY HARRY A. FRANCK

A VAGABOND IN SOVIETLAND  
A VAGABOND JOURNEY AROUND THE WORLD  
FOUR MONTHS AFOOT IN SPAIN  
TRAMPING THROUGH MEXICO, GUATEMALA, AND  
HONDURAS  
ZONE POLICEMAN 88  
VAGABONDING DOWN THE ANDES  
WORKING NORTH FROM PATAGONIA  
VAGABONDING THROUGH CHANGING GERMANY  
ROAMING THROUGH THE WEST INDIES  
GLIMPSES OF JAPAN AND FORMOSA  
WANDERING IN NORTHERN CHINA  
ROVING THROUGH SOUTHERN CHINA  
EAST OF SIAM  
THE FRINGE OF THE MOSLEM WORLD  
I DISCOVER GREECE  
A SCANDINAVIAN SUMMER  
FOOT-LOOSE IN THE BRITISH ISLES

### *Juveniles*

MARCO POLO, JUNIOR  
Working My Way Around the World  
(An abridgment, by Lena M. Franck,  
of Mr. Franck's first book)





*Photo © A. K. Dawson*

**The Smartness of the Soviet Traffic Cop Is Amazing.**

# A VAGABOND IN SOVIETLAND

*America's Perennial Rambler  
Goes Tourist*

By HARRY A. FRANCK



With forty-five reproductions of  
photographs and a map

FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY  
NEW YORK MCMXXXV



To  
PETER  
WHO NEVER CONSENTED  
TO THIS JOURNEY





## WHY

ONE morning a friend startled me by asserting that although I have "been everywhere else" I had never seen the USSR. The accusation gave me an idea: why not go there too? Everybody else was doing it, or had done it, and I hate to follow the crowd. But I never could take a dare. So I went.

Another friend said, "But if you stay there only thirty days, don't, for Mohammed's sake, go and write a book about it!"

I solemnly promised—and here is the book. What else could I do with a notebookful of notes and a lot of uncensored snapshots? Taking notes is an incurable disease; and anyway, if I hadn't diligently scribbled in a notebook whenever a "guide" told me something I didn't quite believe or showed me something we do much better in the U.S.A. (without ever thinking to take any one to see it) she and my fellow-tourists would have put me down as a mental lightweight or a disgruntled capitalist, who did not deserve the good luck of being able to come and see the Noble Experiment, Lenin brand, on its home grounds.

"But," you cry, "only thirty days!" Yes, but that seems to be as long as the erudite Dr. Durant or the intrepid Carveth Wells or portly Alexander Woolcott spent there, and I can't imagine Will Rogers staying that long in any one place, unless there was no air-

plane handy—yet they each got a book out of it. I could go on more or less indefinitely naming men and women who have produced “authoritative” tomes on the Soviet Experiment on a background of thirty days, or less. They are all more or less good reading, but the lot of them taken together do not tell anything like the whole truth.

In fact, you couldn’t get the whole truth about the USSR into a single book if you went and lived there until Doomsday. Russia is too big a subject for any one writer, and Russia is only a small part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Each writer brings a stone to the cairn which may some day make Sovietland visible to the average naked eye. One should read them all—and then run over there in person for a week or two, just to lift the place out of the realm of the legendary into reality. That will give you a hazy, mainly erroneous, but fairly plausible idea of what life means to-day to the hundred and sixty million or so people of many races who are living under the far-flung Red banner. And I said “to-day.” For he who has not seen the Soviet Union during the past year or two is no longer even a pseudo-authority on the subject.

It has never been my habit to interrupt the reader with personal acknowledgments. But I cannot refrain from public admission that the incentive to this journey, as well as continuous and foresighted assistance in assembling the material for this book, was given me by my good friend Albert K. Dawson, who is Director of the Russian Division of the American Express Company.

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# **A VAGABOND IN SOVIETLAND**



## CHAPTER I

### GETTING THERE

*What, Third-Class Again! . . . Flight to Berlin . . .  
A Berlin Sunday . . . This Nazi Business . . .  
Rushing to Riga . . . Good-by to Capitalism*

AT the dock a cable from a college mate who has been eight years in the Soviet Union was handed to me: BE SURE TO INCLUDE US IN YOUR ITINERARY AND PLEASE BRING US A BOTTLE OF CALOMINE LOTION.

The bugs—surely it couldn't be poison ivy—must be pretty bad to warrant cable tolls from Moscow. I could feel myself itching already. I made it two bottles, for luckily there was still time for last-minute shopping and the theater before we sailed. But my bottle came home with me unopened, along with a lot of exploded false impressions about life in Sovietland, including the cost of cables.

Come to think of it, it was twenty-five years since I had crossed the Atlantic third-class. What a change! To be sure, it cost more than three times as much; but what doesn't nowadays? Hereafter I'll travel third on one of these fast boats in preference to first on a slower one. For, like Will Rogers, "I don't want any more boat at any time than is absolutely necessary."

Deck space was more or less limited, cabins rather small, food-menu short—saving a lot of mental effort

at meal-times—and still there was more food than a passenger should eat and space enough for all reasonable purposes, unless you hope to play golf on the way across. The walk from the forward saloon to the aft dining-room six times a day was almost exercise enough. Steamer chairs! Why, in 1907 and 1909 we sat on a winch or a hatch, or the deck itself, wolfing the food that had been slopped into our tin plates as we filed past the door of the galley.

I went third-class all the way to Erivan and back not so much out of respect for the depression and an old-fashioned number of children, as to revive old times, to reconnoiter for more timid souls, and to avoid the charge of dodging any of the hardships. But instead of the picturesque returning immigrants of earlier days the passengers were the same sort of people you meet along Broadway, or at least on Wisconsin Street in Milwaukee. Many thousands of German-born Americans seem to run home for a fortnight or a month during the summer, taking the children with them. Wonder how they afford it! But the boycott was complete; there was not a Jew on board.

If Columbus could have swung across to us in a breeches buoy from his caravel and seen the hotel-floor steadiness, the size, comfort, luxury, safety, and sail-less speed of this rival craft—would his face have been red? But I'll bet life was less monotonous on the *Pinta*. Daily news-bulletins help, perhaps, but they also deprive you of that sometimes welcome sense of isolation from the mad world and its problems which an ocean voyage gave in the old days.

Bierhalle celebrations in the various salons were

different only on the evening that Hitler broadcast his reasons for shooting—seventy-seven, he called it—“traitors,” apparently to the complete satisfaction of all those massed before the loudspeaker on the lower main deck. That same evening, 92½ hours out, the mailplane catapulted off an upper deck at midnight, landed at Southampton at 10:30 next morning, forty-five hours before Bremerhaven greeted us.

Wheat was ripening as the German train sped smoothly inland. Men were cutting it with cradles. Women and boys raked it by hand and tied the bundles with wisps of wheat-straw, as we did in Michigan in my boyhood. I saw one horse-rake that afternoon and, toward sunset, several Krupp binders sitting disconsolate in the rain. Small rectangular fields, and how every inch is cultivated! Oxen meandered past the soldierly ranks of wheat shocks with staggering little loads of hay; potatoes usurped any space the main crops left them; cherries were ripe, apples ripening.

Neither dieting nor reducing exercises would have made bathing beauties of the generously built women who dotted the billiard-table landscape. Many of them wore big black straw hats; more of them had a white cloth over the head, bulky dresses to the ankles, aprons to the insteps; though some skirts barely covered the knees, disclosing piano legs emphasized by bright-yellow, purple, reddish stockings. Women on top of the loads stowed the bundles of wheat pitched up to them. I have always thought the pitching up is easier.



## 6 A VAGABOND IN SOVIETLAND

I had with me a week-old New York *Evening Post* and the Sunday *Times* of six days before, both blazing with Hitler headlines. I rather expected trouble for bringing them. A man opposite, who read but did not speak English, pored over them. But he made no comment except to disagree with some of the minor details about Hitler's life, and handed them back with a Nazi salute.

There were far more bicycles than automobiles on the not very smoothly surfaced black roads. The German and the Nazi flags flew at the tops of unfinished brick and tile-roofed houses. Men and women, and children, were still working in the fields at six that Saturday evening, and when the rain that cleared the landscape for a space was over some of them were out again, until after a wet-faced sun had melted away on the horizon. By that time came birches and pines and sand, prophesying Berlin—which is still using featherbed covers and wedge-shaped bolsters under its pillows. What days these are, when you can go to the theater in New York one Saturday evening and in Berlin the next, without any sense of risk or hurry between them!

Berlin was as calm and quiet that week-end as if it were ruled by the Prince of Monaco. The most orderly of Sunday crowds strolled along Unter den Linden and between the rows of stone-carved horrors in the Tiergarten. Sun-scorched brown or corpse-yellow faces carried my thoughts back to China. For hardly a man in ten wore a hat—one way to avoid uncovering whenever the Nazi occasion calls for it,

perhaps. But hatters seem to be going the way of corset and hatpin makers. Vests—unless the editor changes this to waistcoats—and coats will go next, I hope, and then summer will have lost most of its terrors for the timid sex.

But a mere war and a few revolutions do not erase a basic taste. The German still loves parades and uniforms. No wonder Hitler, who promised them uniforms and gives them parades, has become the national god. Newsboys dressed like generals, medals and all, bellowed their colorless wares at populous corners. Near the gutted Reichstag palace a patient mass of humanity waited a long time just to see the single rather awkward Reichswehr company that finally came marching out of the tree-framed vista of the Tiergarten, another throng of civilians striding along beside it.

But even in Germany pristine enthusiasm wanes in time. Already the Nazi salute has come to resemble the shooing away of a troublesome fly, and the formerly fervent "Heil Hitler!"—the new German for all the everyday greetings—has contracted to "Hei'tler!" People gazed after me whenever I greeted them with the old-fashioned "Guten Tag" or took my leave with a mere "Besten Dank," instead of using that universal slogan and raising a hand in farewell salute, as if they were saying to themselves, "Well, that fellow has plenty of nerve!"

At first I made the slip from force of habit. Then I kept it up out of curiosity, wondering how far I could go without getting a German rebuke. I mentioned the Führer by name, which is not the German

custom, did not salute when others did, even tried my best to look like a Jew. But I never got anything more than a surprised look, if that. A classmate who has been sending us newspaper dispatches from Berlin for two decades told me he had never saluted or lifted his hat in honor of the Hitler régime, and had yet to be reprimanded. Overenthusiastic youths, he said, had now and then mistaken a foreigner for an anti-Hitlerite German and drawn blood. But there is a severe and fairly sure penalty now for making such an error.

No, I got no feeling of Nazi ruthlessness during that Sunday in Berlin, or on my two rides across Germany. *Alles bequem und gemütlich*. The friendliness of fellow-passengers was delightful; the courtesy of the police emphasized again how nearly akin to the cave-man our club-wielders are. In vain did I wait for an opening to say, "All right, but you needn't be so Nazi about it."

The objection to that fast-boat itinerary is that you arrive in Berlin on Saturday evening and probably will want to leave early on Monday, and Berlin is so tightly closed on Sunday that you can't even get into Woolworth's to stock up with dozens of handy little things you feel sure you can't buy in Russia. Germany has a lottery now, but seems still to be too moral to sell the tickets on the Sabbath. On Sundays, or at least on that Sunday, young civilians in white arm-bands take the places of the regular museum guards in Berlin. I suppose that is a Hitler method of reducing unemployment. But they seem to have a very hazy idea of what it is all about; apparently never heard of Rubens. The "terrible heat" Berlin was

complaining of that day was about like "terrible heat" on the coast of Maine, with a good breeze blowing. The happy thought has struck me before in wandering European streets that war gives the surviving men prettier wives.

People seemed to take pride in, rather than try to condone, Hitler's recent radio speech explaining why he had those seventy-seven shot—and rather to regret that he couldn't, for reasons too subtle to be easily explained to a foreigner, give the full number. What an advantage an adventurer has to-day over Cæsar or Hannibal or Napoleon, in being able to reach all the world in an instant by radio! But Berlin's ordinary evening programs have the same noisy jazz and studio applause as ours. It doesn't seem to help much to liquidate Jewish comedians.

I puzzled and queried in vain about Hitler. A demagogue's gift of gab is hardly explanation enough. I can of course understand his grabbing power, with the help of the great industrialists of the Ruhr hiding behind him, just as easily as I can understand a Rockefeller grabbing wealth. But why are people such sheep as to let him get away with it? The more I asked, the more I puzzled. Men and women whose opinions I respect and who were in a position to know assured me that Hitler is much more than a demagogue. But if they were asked to specify they maundered off into such trivialities as, "Why, he doesn't smoke, he doesn't drink, he never goes out with the girls . . ." until I found myself thinking of what

Lincoln said about Grant when the forerunners of the W.C.T.U. came to tattle on him.

If you still persist, others explain it something like this: Hitler, like your F.D.R., like your partner, like perhaps even your husband or wife, is not so hot, but as far as any one can see he is the best thing in sight, and things are in a bad way, if not even desperate. So, in your fear or dread of being left to find your own way out of the wilderness you play that he's the leader and give him what support you can, even if it is only by wearing an NRA badge or flying a red swastika flag from your upper window, or by the mild handclap of a "Ja" vote.

In the "election" of August 19 (though by then I was on my way back through Germany and Hindenburg was dead) Germans all over the world, Germans on ships in foreign harbors, Germans living in foreign lands, Germans wherever the radio or any of the other forms of modern intercommunication could reach them, joined those at home in voting "Ja." Hitler had made it risky not to vote and dangerous to vote anything but "Ja." So those nearly five million Germans who dared to vote "No," to say nothing of almost a million "ruined" votes, probably indicate real facts better than the 38,000,000 who voted "Ja."

But to return to Germany is to realize again that in the mass the German doesn't think, politically. He was trained to believe that experts, professional politicians or born governors, Kaiser or Hindenburg, did that for him, so he follows the mob. It is typical of the German masses not to have their own opinion on anything outside their own immediate ken—and to be

proud of it. The man keeping a railway newsstand wouldn't even tell me which Berlin paper is best, saying, "They all claim it." Besides, there was no anti-Hitler propaganda—the Communists of course had to work in deadly secret—no one to tell them to vote "No," or at least to refrain from voting, or, if they were afraid of getting caught at that, to put in a blank ballot. Surprising that the mass of the people anywhere needs to be told even as simple a thing as that before they can think of it.

An American correspondent who keeps his ear to the ground in Berlin guessed that probably fifty per cent of the Germans are enthusiastic for Hitler. Some—ignoring the racial discrepancy—are convinced he is "a new Christ, returned to earth in answer to nineteen hundred years of a leaderless mankind, even as it was prophesied." The rest trail along because to vote anything but "Ja" would be to "waste your vote." The Führer's Austrian birth apparently means nothing to them. For the German is a racial entity, not a matter of place of birth or naturalization, such as "American" means to us.

There is a widespread belief in Europe that Communism is merely a world-wide plot of the Jews to rule the world, to make the Gentiles work for them while they sit in swivel-chairs in high government offices and take the ease and the profits. Not being a Jew I have no inside information on the subject. But many an apparently intelligent German will assure you that it was a choice between the Jews, alias Stalin, and Hitler, and that Hitler was obviously preferable, even if the fervor behind many Nazi salutes is only pretense.

"Jews must take second table," said one man trying to explain certain recent events succinctly. "There must not be more of them in government offices and the important professions than is their proportion in the population of Germany, which is three per cent." After all, a German is a German, while an American is a hodgepodge of migrated racial strains, Jews included.

A German female journalist wrote, in what she considered a serious attempt to appraise Hitler, that "he has eyes like fairy stories." Perhaps that explains it. I wonder if overmuch cinema-going has not made all of us prone to accent as our leaders men with movie-star attributes.

There are Jews, on the other hand, who would have you believe that handsome Adolf is a pervert. They allege that he never goes out with the girls because he had no luck with them in his youth, never accomplished his purpose, at least to mutual satisfaction, so gave it up. They call upon Freud and his successors to prove that this frustration made him a sadist hungry for power. Well, physical disabilities do sometimes have their effect on world events. A withered arm certainly played its part in bringing mankind to its present straits.

More rational people insist that Hitler is perfectly normal but interested only in politics, "so absorbed in politics that he never thinks of the girls or anything else, except how to rule." But he must at least think to remind his barber not to cut that famous mane of his. To lose that would, I fancy, cost him half his followers. We don't like our heroes changed, even

in looks. We form a complete picture of them in our minds when they first burst forth on the front page, and to be corrected in any part of our mental image is as annoying a slap at our self-esteem as to be told we haven't made such and such a stroke right in an actual physical painting.

This much is obvious: Hitler is a clever opportunist—as what politician, what “successful” man isn't?—with that streak of the faker, of the “four-flusher,” which seems to be essential to success in almost any line in which the public is primarily concerned. He knows his German psychology. If he is weak on that of other races it is merely an added proof that he is German. For apparently Germans will never understand that there are people, races, nations, whom a polite request moves more easily and effectively than “You must!”; that reasoning may produce results which orders never do. It is all epitomized in the little signs beneath the windows in European railway carriages: “Il est dangereux de se pencher dehors” and “NICHT HINAUSLEHNEN!”

I wondered, but my classmate of the grounded ear assured me that Hitler is probably not foresighted enough deliberately to incense foreign countries in order to unite the Germans. Just the usual German weakness in non-German psychology, he called it. Besides, the trick of any one in Hitler's position is to tell two stories, one for internal combustion, so to speak, the other for foreign consumption. That is a man's job, calling for more than mere cleverness and opportunism and a truculent mane of hair.

It seemed to be the consensus of opinion, however,



that, barring accidents, such as an unsuccessful war, this former lance corporal, this ex-house-painter son of a lowly customs official, born in Austria, should be able to hold his most complete power in history over the German people—real caveman tribal chieftain stuff—until he is as old as Hindenburg was, even though he never lives to found a new dynasty. Or again, he may suddenly vanish overnight, like a puff of smoke.

I have heard both sides, if somewhat briefly, and I am still wondering how men like Hitler rise to such giddy heights. It is all very confusing; and to see an old-fashioned Bavarian mountaineer in his queer medieval costume raise his right hand in the Nazi salute and shout "Hei'tler!" is somehow an incongruous sensation.

Meanwhile Kurt Wessel, shot by the Communists, is on the way to become a national saint, and German boys are being subjected to weird lighting effects in *Jugendherberge* and similar places of youthful gathering, to impress upon them the motto, "I was born to die for my country."

Why shouldn't New York and Philadelphia and a hundred other American cities have the tiny gardens and diminutive shacks that cover the outskirts and acres of unbuilt Berlin—and Stockholm, and Prague, and so many other European cities? Is it the old story of the prophet without honor in his own country? For unless memory is failing me it was Governor Pin-gree of Michigan who first tried, in Detroit, that solution for unemployment.

The Polish Corridor proved no barrier on that twenty-one-hour express journey from Berlin to Riga; we were merely locked in. Soldierly rows, graceful half-circles of women were working in the fields of Poland. In Germany they had been scattered, as if left to their own volition, which seems incongruous. Across a corner of Danzig, within sight of its city towers, the alien train hurried on into East Prussia, green and well-cultivated, with storks more plentiful, four-team binders, and cement fences against winter snowdrifts. There was a glimpse of the sea before Königsberg brought freedom and an almost ostentatious parading of the station platform. Well, I suppose we would resent being locked in by the Mexicans between Kansas and California. I listened and looked in vain, however, for any general conviction that East Prussia would some day rejoin the rest of the Fatherland territorially.

Virbalis held us half an early evening hour for Lithuanian frontier formalities. By ten we were in Kaunas, or Kovno, if you prefer, the "provisionary" capital, where my hopes for a night's sleep were shattered by an influx of Jews on an excursion to Riga. During the night I got a hint of why certain Jews are sometimes disliked in eastern Europe. The excursionists were occupying several more compartments than they needed, gathering in one after the other for hilarious companionship. For hours my compartment was empty, except for a mammoth older Jewish woman nodding on the other half of my hard bench. When a Lithuanian woman noiselessly entered, she woke up long enough to order her into the least desirable corner

of the unoccupied bench her son had preëmpted and then abandoned hours before; and the woman meekly obeyed. But sometimes at long last meekness breaks out in pogroms, or at least in "Hei'tler!"

I drifted off once, in a cramped position, only to be waked half an hour later at the last Lithuanian town, where they wanted to know if I still had with me the same amount of money that I had declared in entering the country five or six hours before. How should I know, under the circumstances, until I looked? We fussed about there and at Maitene, the Latvian frontier station, for an hour, which meant two hours lost, for clocks move forward again there. Think of the jobs for Deserving Democrats if we would take a tip from Europe and make our state lines frontiers! It was daybreak by two o'clock, the sun fairly well up by the time we went on at four, an hour later, so why try to sleep again? Second-class passengers, even in the sleeping compartments, hadn't fared much better.

We were kidnaped and breakfasted in Riga by a gangling, wall-eyed beanpole of a man wearing a "Hotel Europa" cap. Then we chased all over town on what we thought then were important errands. One of us had no Russian visa—pure clerkly oversight in New York. I shall not blame you for refusing to believe that he got one in time to leave by the afternoon train, but I can't spare the space to tell you what he went through that morning in accomplishing that miracle. Two others of us wanted something else, I have forgotten now just what. Sightseeing mainly, I think it was, and my companionship. No, not for the



An "Open" Market (Under a Glass Roof) in Moscow.



Yes, Women Enjoy Complete Equality in Sovietland.



Most of Sovietland's Traffic Lights Are Still Manipulated by Hand.



The Street-Cleaners of Russia All Wear Skirts.

mere pleasure of it, but because almost all Riga speaks German, and so do I. Last but not least, *I* wanted to buy a milkcan and a tin cup and some food for the hungry days ahead.

You see, on the steamer an alleged authority on the USSR had told me how very necessary such a milkcan would be to get hot water in for my tea at Russian stations. She had described it in detail—double cover, wire handle and all—and at the last possible moment I found it, bought it, along with a week's supply of bologna, cheese, and white bread, a little package of tea, some raspberries and gooseberries for more immediate consumption, and waddled back to the hotel looking like Santa Claus astray in the southern hemisphere. Unfortunately, while her familiarity with Russia was real enough, so real that she can no longer get a Soviet visa herself, that particular authority had not been in the Soviet Union for two or three years; and I have already mentioned that a year or so is about as long as facts stay facts in present-day Russia.

I used that milkcan once, I think, for the express purpose for which I bought it, though an Englishman might have used it more. But I brought it home with me. In fact, that Scotch strain in my ancestry even forced me to eat some of the bologna and cheese and anemic white bread now and then during my Soviet days. I tried in vain to give the rest away, finally shut my watering eyes and threw it out a train window.

Riga was slow and her shops astonishingly expensive, partly because the official rate was only 3.04 lats to the dollar, though I have heard that money boot-

leggers pay as high as 3.70. The chicken-an'-everything dinner to order was not exorbitant, however, especially as it included the services of the gangling hotel runner in getting us and our baggage into the early afternoon daily train to Leningrad.

We—but here, I see I have overlooked the introductions. We were a perennial vagabond, a broad-minded minister from Boston, a playful physical director from California, and an educational bureaucrat with a sense of humor from Harrisburg, who had drifted together during that Berlin-to-Riga adventure. As I started to say, we all found ourselves assigned to the same compartment. The mere facts that two of us had third-class and two of us second-class tickets and that one of us was a woman seemed to make us all the more congruous in the eyes of the Latvian railway officials. Still, the minister and the lady, armed with second-class tickets on a train that had no second-class room for them, were furnished mattresses and sheets, even pillows and pillowcases, on their lower "berths," while the third-class half of us had to be content with the two upper shelves unadorned—until the softer of us weakened and paid \$1.30 for similar bedding. Late that evening the trainman relented and gave the last and most hardy of us a bare mattress for nothing. The trouble is I can't overlook favors, and that one cost me a forty-cent tip next morning.

The train poked along through northern-Michigan scenery, birches, evergreens, and sand, making long stops at miserable stations with logs and firewood and barrel-staves piled high about them. The Pullman porter-conductor who took up our tickets at the start

—and gave us no receipt for them—called our attention, with pride and wonder in his voice, to the “Latvian Switzerland,” a region of mountains several feet high. Otherwise we should never have noticed a break in the dead-level monotony of sand and birches and evergreens, or of the people along the way, solemn, unsmiling, amusingly slow in their mental reactions, even the children with the corners of their mouths perpetually drawn down.



## CHAPTER II

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS

*Absorbed by the Proletariat . . . Welcome to Soviet-land . . . Intourist Farrago . . . What, not a Tourist! . . . Ah, those Guides!*

WE reached the Soviet border about midnight and moved our watches ahead an hour for the seventh time since leaving New York. A sad-faced girdle-less girl in a tacky red hat, who spoke a little English and understood less, announced herself as the Intourist guide and interpreter. There must have been a dozen men in uniform with her. A lanky, harmless-looking boy in the crumpled-canvas Red Army uniform took up our passports. Another man sat down in our compartment and carefully gave us receipts for the money, express checks, letters of credit, cameras, jewelry, and anything made of gold which we chose or remembered to declare, and then the train crawled on.

Eventually we stopped at another station, swarming with soldiers or police—in the USSR the distinction is slight. Native passengers, who boarded the train there in something resembling a riot, were herded into an ancient car and locked in. Then the authorities turned their attention to us. A dwarfish youth began lifting suitcases down from the deep cupboard over each compartment door. I lifted my own down, from

force of habit, almost before I realized it. Then in walked a girl who ought to have been in bed hours before—she was surely not over sixteen and small for her age—in an almost sumptuous blue uniform, and began silently to go through our baggage. It was the most thorough frisking I have ever had, except once at what used to be Urga, Mongolia, in the early days of Red rule there. All books and papers she found she handed to the lanky boy soldier, who solemnly examined them—though obviously he could not even read the titles—and handed them back. It took her well over an hour to go through that one car, with perhaps thirty passengers. Luckily, she was fairly good at replacing things.

Then—in this graftless and tipless land—a dwarfish youth, abetted by the Intourist “guide” and a half-uniformed man on guard at our compartment door, demanded fifteen cents for each bag he had lifted down from the cupboard. It doesn’t sound like much, but remember we were in Russia. Besides, I was out of change and not anxious to turn a dollar into kopeks at the official rate. But still more out of curiosity I mentioned that I had handled my own bag. The argument was long and rather vociferous, but I won in the end. Four people in the next compartment paid ninety-five cents for the lifting down of their seven suitcases. Our woman companion was charged thirty cents to have the bag she had checked through from Riga to Leningrad carried into the compartment; and then she was asked to come to the baggage-room and see it examined! But every one got long receipts to prove there was no graft or tipping involved.

Finally the hubbub subsided, our passports were returned, some of the people in uniform disappeared, and the train rambled reluctantly on. Perhaps I was wrong in feeling that the whole thing was not only a trifle silly, like all frontier formalities, but window-dressing, a mild insult to our intelligence, especially the girl customs official, as if Russia were saying to us, "See how bright our young people are," or "how we make no distinction in sexes," or "You see, our men are all so busy that we have to call on the girls for this kind of work." Of course the young people are the ardent supporters of the present régime in Sovietland, and this girl was probably too young to be corruptible or to take anything for granted. But she was less wise than the old-fashioned customs officers inhabiting most frontiers, who read passengers' faces more than they do their baggage. That sixteen-year-old girl couldn't read faces, so she had to read baggage thoroughly. But she overlooked two American newspapers and a weekly magazine that are not very welcome in Russia and two and a half boxes of cigars and more than a carton of cigarettes I had carelessly tossed up into the rack with my raincoat. Still, Intourist literature says "tourists may bring in enough cigars, cigarettes, and tobacco for their own use during their stay"—and I was here for thirty days.

People who came from London to Leningrad by sea—there is a "special" round-trip and three-weeks' tour for £24—left London Bridge on Saturday evening and reached Leningrad on Thursday morning. They said the trip was pleasant in spite of a crowded steamer—until they got there. Then they sat for NINE

hours in the custom-house, provided with chairs, shops, and lots of chances to spend money; that is, real money, known to the USSR as *valuta*.

A more nearly attractive Intourist schoolgirl guide welcomed us to Leningrad at eleven next morning, right on the time-table dot. Porters, asking no pay, whisked away our baggage; we saw it next at the hotel. But the "Lincoln" of tourist tales of Russia was a chattering bus, typical of all eastern Europe, in which we bumped and jolted over the cobbles to the Hotel d'Europe. Breakfast (at noon) on the roof, with alcoves, a corner kiosk, a balcony higher still from which there was an even better view of Leningrad, used up the time until a room was available. That was huge and palatial, half a block from the elevators, with an anteroom, a big bathroom with ample hot and cold water in the luxurious lavabo, an immense mirror—but no bathtub. The pipes that had once served one were still clawing the air and something about them suggested that the tub had been torn out in a hurry by looters or in anger by people with a deep scorn for such aristocratic trappings. But my imagination may have been working overtime. Only my bad luck, probably, for some other "specials" got room with bath.

There were electric lights everywhere, even at the head of the bed, and not one bulb of them was "kaput." There was a huge sofa, an easy-chair, an arm-chair, four other chairs, all upholstered in spotless velvet of a regal orange tinge. There was a center table with a snow-white cloth, a huge desk with sets of drawers behind a locking door which I'd like to have at home.

There was the scribbler's delight, an immense wastebasket, a big closet with many coat-hangers, a prince's bed in an alcove behind heavy velvet curtains, with two huge pillows. Russian bed-making calls for no *traversin* or wedge under the pillow, no featherbed cover buttoned into a sheet, such as makes night-life miserable in much of northern Europe. A mahogany-looking cabinet inclosed the steam radiator; there were coat-hooks in the anteroom, a bottle of boiled (but not cold) water and glasses on the sideboard, a park with a museum outside—but also, since nothing is perfect in this imperfect world, a busy street-car corner.

I describe my first Russian room in detail lest some impecunious person eager to see the Russian Experiment hesitate to travel "special." But let me hasten to add, before imagination leaves a false impression, that not all hotel rooms I inhabited in Russia were so fit for a tzar. If I was an aristocrat in that Hotel d'Europe in Leningrad I was a bourgeois in Moscow, where my room was no larger than my Leningrad bathroom, though it too had its anteroom, its private toilet and washroom with unfailing hot water, and everything else essential. I was one of the proletariat in—well, in Rostov-on-Don, for instance, my private toilet and washroom were waterless as the Sahara, the toilet had no seat and I rang half an hour for hot water before a chambermaid—speaking German, hence worth waiting for, when she finally did come—brought me half a teapotful but called attention to the fact that my washbowl discharged onto the cement floor and led me down the hall to a common toilet-washroom that offered no privacy and little convenience. Somehow, for all my

diversified experiences, I still do not dote on public-room sponge baths. I was waked at midnight there in Rostov from the first delicious respite from a long and weary train-ride by two servants who had come to take the other bed out of my room and again at two in the morning by an excited young man who had come—in vain—to get the money he had hidden in the mattress of that bed. My window was uncurtained and of course there are no screens in Russia, so that flies began playing soccer over my face at dawn and the sun beat in upon me hours before I should have chosen to get up, had it not been that by that time there had long since begun the terrific boiler-factory uproar of workmen determined to make that hotel the equal of any, men with the same identical damn-those-lazy-rich-people-who-can-lie-abed-while-we-have-to-work attitude of garbage-gatherers in capitalistic countries. I have nothing whatever against the Five Year Plan, but I resent it outside my window at dawn.

There were worse hotels than that one in Rostov, where you dine in a room built out over the sidewalk and see all the main street life as you eat. In Batum, for example, there is—but how foolish not to enjoy what we have without borrowing trouble. Besides, that Rostov hotel and several others were being repaired or rebuilt and lots of Soviet cities are building sumptuous new ones so that by another year all this will be out of date. Let's return to our Leningrad luxury.

The bell worked, and with no unusual delay I got a huge scalding-hot bath half a mile or so down the hall, and the fact that it cost me seventy cents pertains

to another matter. The two huge Poles who brought to my room the bags one of them could easily have carried, hung about with that familiar tip-wanting air that even Atlanta, Georgia, has not been able to legislate out of existence. But I had no particular desire to be shot at sunrise and I was sure I had read somewhere that tipping is strictly forbidden in the USSR. So I compromised by giving them each an American cigarette. Their profuse thanks were so fervent as to suggest sarcasm.

The elevator (they call it a lift in Russia) "boy" was identical with those in any American hotel, only thinner, more tired, more unhappy, hopeless, dissatisfied, hungry, and unshaved-looking, in his heavy uniform. If you can't even reform the coat off a man's back in summer how can you expect to reform the world? He mentioned casually one afternoon that he had been riding up and down in that airless contraption for fourteen unbroken hours and had no idea when he would be relieved. But surely he must have been mistaken. For I was assured times without number that the seven-hour day, or less, is now universal in the Soviet Union.

Then I went downstairs and made the acquaintance of the Intourist! I was never a tourist before, so my boast of having at last discovered chaos and bedlam personified should not perhaps be hung on the door of the Soviet State Tourist monopoly. Picture to yourself a hotel lobby, ample, commodious, in some cases almost equal to our best hotel lobbies at home, in others poorly supplied with space or convenience.

On one side is the long counter over which men assign you to your room, with girls at desks who act just as supercilious and stupid as their prototypes in any capitalist society. "*Stamps?* Get yer stamps at the newspaper desk." Whoever would have supposed there would be a newspaper desk in a Russian hotel? On the other side, perhaps behind another counter, are the desks of the perpetually excited young people, nearly all of them girls, in charge of travel and sight-seeing services for tourists.

You can stand at that counter for hours while high-school youngsters struggle in vain with their Slav-mindedness. It is much the same all over Russia, wherever executive ability is needed, perhaps because they have always used the abacus instead of their heads—no Russian will add up fifteen and ten without a long clicking of the little balls on the wooden arithmetic they have in common with the more extreme Orientals. But the Russian gift for excited non-action surely reaches its zenith where tourists are handled.

Patience and good-nature they have, but a complete absence of orderliness of minds; a naturally disorderly people, mentally at least, who toss things hither and yon and never pick them up again, who have no place for anything and nothing in its place. They scorn system, even to arranging a heap of passports in alphabetical or some other order. Help costs next to nothing, I suppose, so why worry about doing the same thing over and over? Yet they are much hurt if you hint that any American Boy Scout of fifteen could give them a system in a day that would save most of their time and three-fourths of their nervous energy—to say



nothing of postponing the tourist's admission to a madhouse.

Their chief trouble is that they never finish one job before they begin another. Never once, except in the very rare cases when I was the only petitioner, did I get the information I was seeking before the informant turned to answer some one else. Let any one else butt in, or even a new thought occur to her, and off goes your informant's mind at a tangent, like an untrained bird dog, without so much as a hint that she has forgotten you, yet as if you had so completely escaped her mind that you had suddenly become invisible. It is telephone bad manners transferred to personal interviews.

The chief hardship of the tourist in Russia is the hare-brained pandemonium of the hotel-excursion brigade, the chaotic herding into buses for the day's sightseeing. The typed program on the counter announces an excursion at 9, for instance. From 9 to 10:30 you rush in and out of the hotel on the persistent but never truthful rumor that the bus is ready. You crowd into bus after bus, only to learn eventually by intuition that it is the wrong bus. You are lucky if you get off by 11—for anywhere.

The time sense seems to have been forgotten entirely in creating the Russian. In leaving Leningrad I was warned to have my bags packed by 7; they actually left my room, on my insistence, at 9:20. I was told to come for my railway ticket at 8:45, then at 9, then at 9:45, then at 10, and finally they began to hand out passports at 10:30—to any one who claimed them, without even looking at the photographs in them. An-

nounce your departure for the evening of August 7 the moment you arrive on August 2 and there will be no signs of any railway ticket for you at 7 P.M. on the 7th. Like the South Americans, they will never believe you are going to do something on a certain day, no matter how much you swear to it beforehand. "Are you still going to-day?" Really, this is incredible! True, they manage to get a surprising number of travelers off on the evening they name. But meanwhile each of them has suffered the torture of being left behind a dozen times.

Performances advertised to begin at 8:30 seldom get under way much before 10 even when special efforts are made to impress tourists. A ten-minute intermission becomes half an hour; the show gets out long after midnight. The typewritten program tells you the bus will leave Yalta for Sevastopol at 9. The night before, as you come in from a ballet during the small hours, you are solemnly informed that it will leave at 8. So you tell them to wake you at 7. They do so—at 5:30. By 7 you are done with breakfast and from then on you run incessantly back and forth between the breakfast garden and the bus, on the repeated rumor that it is "going right now." Finally, about 9:30, you get into the right one and are off, perhaps, toward 10, just as you knew you would be, if only you had the courage to believe all previous experiences.

It is not all the fault of the Intourist people, by any means. Much of it is due to the coils of red tape, common to a lot of Europe irrespective of communistic tendencies. But a little mental discipline and a time-

clock drive would reduce a disconcerting comic opera without music to a commonplace travel-agency scene.

It is a fixed idea that tourists in the USSR are kept from seeing what its authorities do not wish them to see. This is not quite true. In fact, instead of keeping you from seeing what you want to see, the trouble is to get them to show you what they want you to see. Ask where to go or where you can go or when you can go and the disheveled girl behind the Intourist counter says, "Oh, come to-morrow. I am tired now. I have worked twelve hours." Which is only too true. But, after all, most of us don't come to Russia just to sit and wait until a train is ready to take us somewhere else.

They don't let Russians into our trains, hotels, buses, special performances, if there are enough of us to fill them. The guides don't want you to notice street arabs or follow a funeral; they want you only to see children's homes and busy factories. But when I traveled alone no suggestion was ever made of keeping me from native contact or ordinary experiences; I was freely exposed to whatever the masses had to show or tell me. I wandered whenever and wherever the spirit moved me and never once met a hint of interference. No, they do nothing whatever actively to hinder you from mingling with the masses—except by wasting your time, pleading ignorance to information they do not wish you to have, trying to keep you amused with their own shows, tying you up in railway stations and on slow trains, all of which is perhaps quite unintentional. I can't, in fact, imagine the rank and file Intourist employee being subtle enough to do these things

intentionally. But there is certainly a clever man at the head of Intourist, and the bets are five to one that he is Jewish.

The Intourist girls pretend, probably honestly believe, that they have a lot to show you, imply that they are going to keep you on the dead run for days. "What, you are only going to stay two days?" But—except in the old and the new capital—by the time they have dawdled you through the two-and-a-half-hour excursion to which your ticket entitles you daily they—or at least you—suddenly find they have nothing more to show you. The game seems to be to stall and procrastinate, to hedge and play dumb and imply that unimportant things are important and vice versa, so they can keep you as long as possible, at so much a day, or at least keep you from following your own guidance. There is an immense amount to see in the USSR that is very much worth seeing. But most of it is not on the Intourist programs and it is up to the individual tourist whether he sees little or a great deal. A great many tourists are so lacking in enterprise and initiative or are so afraid of their own shadows out of sight of a guide and interpreter that they see only what they are taken to see.

Yes, for once I was, at least technically speaking, a mere tourist. But I beg of you to wait before throwing this opusculc into the wastebasket until I have time to explain why that does not make me blush as furiously as it would in other times and places. Besides, to borrow a phrase from the days when my blacksmithing father hoped to correct my worst faults with a

hickory buggy-spoke, "I'll never do it again" if I am let off this time. Being a tourist has its advantages—in the USSR. For instance: in Rostov-on-Don the outdoor photographers who make a passport or a souvenir caricature of you while you wait were much interested in my miniature camera. I was in the midst of showing it to a group of them in detail when a GPU officer, in a snow-white garb that contrasted loudly with the "open" market and church-steps squalor about us, reached in to grab it. I murmured "Intourist" and he faded out of the picture like the movie villain who has been hit in the eye with a lemon pie.

Intourist won't tell, but it is estimated that at least six thousand American tourists, exclusive of those who came on cruises and stopped a day or two in Leningrad or Odessa, visited the Soviet Union during the first year of our official recognition of the Stalin régime—and his of us. One day last July there were 1412 foreign visitors in Moscow hotels. Forty per cent of Intourist "guests" carry American passports. Since Hitler's heavy hand has fallen upon the Fatherland barely one in ten is German; France and England each supply fifteen per cent of the total, Austria and Czechoslovakia about half as many, six per cent come from the Scandinavian countries, with virtually all the rest of the world trailing out to infinity behind us. Everything indicates that Americans will be still more in the majority another year, which is why the study of English has first place now in the Moscow school for guides and special thought is being given to American tastes in the matter of food and entertainment.

But except in a few large conducted groups not many of the holders of American passports are lifelong Americans. On close-up view they turn out to be "Americans" born in Russia or its fellow Soviet republics. State Department figures show that a stockholders' majority of all tourists to Russia from the United States were either born in Russia or have relatives there. Former Russians who are not Jewish do not often return, mostly because they have been or are afraid of being accused of White sympathies or are refused passport visas. Ninety per cent of those Russian Jews who make up the majority of American visitors to the Soviet Union were born in tzarist Russia, the rest being their children who are brought or come back to see grandmother. Many of them are incredibly supercilious about their American citizenship, especially if they speak atrocious English. You get so sick and tired of hearing near-English with the tongue-tied Russian accent! I wonder, by the way, to what extent the so-called American citizens of Russian birth are scouting around to check up on American tourists' impressions of their home lands. But visitors to Russia are more serious-minded than the general run of tourists.

I wish I had such a business as the Soviet State Tourist monopoly, familiarly known as Intourist. No one else can sell tickets, that is, conduct a travel agency, in the Soviet Union. Even the return half of my round-trip ticket between New York and Russia had to be exchanged for Intourist coupons. It is physically possible to get into Sovietland without being under the wing of Intourist, but it takes lots of time and more

money. Intourist accepts only *valuta*, foreign money, and inside the Soviet boundaries it pays out only paper rubles for the accommodations of its "guests." Not until you have heard a dissertation on money in the USSR will you realize what a marvelous "break" that would give to any business organization.

You buy days, not mere travel, from Intourist. It will sell you as few as five days in the USSR, binding itself to furnish you everything any reasonable traveler would expect, and throwing in a visa good for a month. If you apply for a Soviet visa without placing yourself in the hands of Intourist that visa alone will cost you \$25—if you ever get it. The trick for those who wish to visit friends or relatives in Sovietland, or to get entirely off the beaten track on their own, is to buy a few days of Intourist protection, then ask to be released from it for a time, or use up all their days first, and take charge of themselves. Then they can live on Russian rubles and buy their own train tickets and hunt their own hotel accommodations and—in short, subject themselves to all the difficulties and misfortunes of Soviet subjects. The chances are that they will spend a week getting up to the head of the line-up at a railway ticket office, another in finding room on a train, and more than one night outside looking in as far as lodging, perhaps even food, is concerned. No, whatever your plans are in the USSR you had better at least start out under the wing of the State Tourist monopoly.

"Special" tourists now pay \$5 a day; "tourist category," \$8; "first category," \$15, and there is, I believe, a "luxury category." Intourist has invented amusing

solecisms, circumlocutions in nomenclature, to avoid the use of the word "class" in a "classless" society; and there is indeed almost a classless society among tourists in the USSR. Imagine what we would call first and third-class tourists living in the same hotel, in very similar rooms, eating in the same dining room, even at the same table, riding in the same trains, buses, Lincolns in a capitalistic country!

About the only advantage the "first category" tourist has over us "specials" is the privilege of knowing that he is first-class—which of course means a lot to some people. I have seen a large group of "tourist category" visitors sleeping on cots in a fifty-cot make-shift dormitory, while I occupied in the same hotel a much better room than I can afford in New York. Herein lies the greatest advantage of going to Russia with an "open order" and planning your trip after you get there, instead of clinging to a group over an itinerary fixed in advance. I have raced in a Lincoln past a jolting bus-load of "first category" rivals to the room accommodations ahead, and whether we "specials" rode to or from an excursion point in a Lincoln while a larger group of our betters were accommodated with a bus seemed to depend more on the convenience of the moment than on the amount we had paid. One suspects that the Soviet authorities temper the wind to the shorn lamb, take into account that some of us are poor but worthy—of seeing their Great Experiment. In keeping perhaps with their endeavor to charge their own people ten per cent of their income for lodging, irrespective of the size of the income, they exploit the rich "exploiters" from other countries by



giving them comparatively little more for their dirty, but welcome, *valuta* than they give the tourist proletariat for so much less of it.

I don't mean to imply that there are no differences. For instance—in Yalta, was it?—when I stopped on my way through the dining garden to pass the time of day, as is fitting in a classless society, with an English couple who had told me they were paying £17 a day for “luxury category,” I noticed a pickle on their table. I like Russian pickles, which cost half a cent or so each in the “open” markets. So I told my waiter to bring me one also. He did—with a bill for five cents.

More seriously speaking, “specials” travel in “hard wagons”; all others in upholstered sleeping compartments. That is, they do if there is room for them in “soft,” as they call it in classless Russia—and in which, they say, there are much more likely to be fleas. For breakfast, “specials” get compote *or* eggs; their betters get both. At mid-afternoon dinner the aristocrats may indulge in five courses, “specials” must content themselves with three. But it is never a hardship to skip the fish and the salad; and, anyway, Russian waiters are so used to serving salad that they often forget the color of the diner's meal ticket; or some higher category individual sitting beside or opposite you will probably have more salad than he can use; and in a communistic society it is hard to draw watertight class lines. Supper, I believe, varies not an iota; and all categories get just as good—or bad—“guides.”

Please don't read any criticism of Intourist into all this; I am for equality myself, the same accommoda-

tions, even the same food, up to the point of serious overeating, for everybody the world over.

We certainly got a lot for our money, we "specials." You couldn't travel and live half as well in most European countries on \$5 a day. We got two hundred kilometers of train or steamer or automobile travel a day—that is, six thousand kilometers on a thirty-day ticket, no matter how long any particular journey may be. We got, on the whole, excellent hotel rooms and plenty to eat, good meals, for Russia. The fact that I came home some fifteen pounds lighter was not a mishap and was offset by the fact that I was as hard as if I had spent the summer in Muldoon's camp. But especially we got freedom from care, from fighting for tickets and places on trains and steamers, from bargaining with porters and taxi-drivers, from hunting and making terms for hotel rooms, from watching our own baggage, catching our own trains, planning our own sightseeing if we preferred to be lazy, hiring interpreters, seeing that our drinking water was boiled—yes, we got a lot, and so does Intourist. For they get their beloved *valuta* and pay out, surely, not forty per cent of it for what they give us. So a good time is had by all.

We were off at last, that first day in Leningrad, under the wing of an almost good-looking guide with shapely bare legs and wavy, uncovered chestnut hair, and too much smile, since she needed badly the services of an orthodontist. Her motto, which she overworked, almost her only English, was "Led's go!"

The tourist's first excursion in any new town, that

two and a half hours of conducted attention to which he is entitled daily by the terms of his contract with Intourist, consists of "sightseeing," which means bumping about town and outskirts over endless cobbles, hanging on for dear life, in a bus that outdoes the chamois for agility and the lion for angry noises. Trying to hear—until you learn that it is not worth hearing—what the guide has to say on this preliminary rubberneck tour is even more of a strain. Weak, squeaky girl voices, hoarse with overwork, speaking bad English, and an oldish bus over constant cobbles do not make a good combination.

Not a bad idea, this using girls as guides. But it approaches an insult to our intelligence to give us a girl with a thirteen-year-old mentality and a second-year-high-school philosophy of life, instead of a mature and informed interpreter—girls too whose voices are too dim or too husky to be heard at the back of the smallest group and are quite inaudible in a crowd. Most guides are very much of the people. Even if they really know English they do not know enough of anything else to tell the seasoned and intellectually curious traveler much that is worth while. But I imagine it is all thought out, like most of the Russian plan; that they use girl guides purposely, because they know so little, including old Russia, can't tell tourists too much, because they don't know too much themselves. Older and more intelligent people might not be able to suppress a sigh now and then for the good old days, to overlook some contrast with olden times.

Though the really cultured people speaking English well have been liquidated, a few who learned it under

the old régime have "adjusted" themselves and survived. That first evening in Leningrad, for instance, a Norwegian woman and a Swedish man and I had as guide in an open Lincoln a genuinely cultured woman in the thirties, who spoke French and German perfectly, though no English. She wore the red beret affected by so many guides and, at the ends of her bare arms, the only gloves I can remember seeing in the USSR. We were off at 7:30 for "outdoor sightseeing," ending at a Culture and Rest Park so vast that we could not have walked through it by midnight. It had been a Grand Duke's estate, I believe. But this woman, with well-to-do parents and a good home before the revolution, was not a product of Soviet schooling. In Rostov-on-Don the other most nearly cultured guide of my Soviet travels, an older woman who spoke perfect English, knew most of the things an experienced traveler wishes to know. Both these women purported to be very ardent believers in the present régime; but if I had to bet on the subject I'll wager they were both "radishes."

The only man guide I had was a boilermaker who had come back two or three years before from twenty years in the United States. Incidentally, he was the only native I ever saw in the USSR visibly enlivened by drink. A bachelor, who got 250 rubles a month as Intourist assistant manager, paid eighteen rubles a month for two rooms with electric light and steam heat, in a town far from the old or the new capital, he claimed to be more satisfied and contented than in the United States at \$10 or more a day. But I wonder.

My second day in Leningrad gave me a guide with golden teeth, rouged lips, but like most guides, with no rouge on her cheeks—too scarce or too expensive perhaps. Her English . . . well, when she broke out in a tongue she fondly hoped was ours, one of our Russian-American tourist ladies cried out in ecstasy, "Say, she's speaking English! She must be educated."

But I am not going to give an inventory of all the guides who chaperoned me in the USSR just because the novelty of constant attention from the youthful fair sex has almost betrayed me into it. In general, Intourist guides have their faults as go-betweens in any attempt to evaluate Soviet thoughts and doings. But their vocabularies alone make even the poorest of them worth knowing:

"See, tourists, zey are remantling zat building."

"Here is ze robber feactory" (rubber factory).

"Ziss it iss ze church where ze tzars were coronationed, but it is under reparations, so ve can't to see it."

"Zat lady, she is Salome, and you see, tourists, she iss carry on ze plate ze head of Ivan Baptizer."

And if one of the prettiest guides in the USSR comes up to you and says, "Our name iss Franck, yes?" is it to be taken as a proposal?

I was surprised at the frankness of our guides and the obvious truthfulness of much that they told us. They certainly debunk Russian history. I'd love to hear some of our pet historical inaccuracies and patriotic prejudices treated the way Intourist guides treat those of tzarist Russia. But they draw as long a bow as possible to make everything fit into or illustrate the

Soviet scheme of things and it is surprising how many famous old paintings and prerevolutionary museum exhibits can be turned into far-fetched communistic or anti-bourgeois propaganda:

"See, he looks like a bourgeois."

"Zere, you see ze belly on heem. He eat too much, because he vas reech."

I am sure the painter of the splendid canvas showing the marriage of an old man to a sad-eyed girl never thought of his theme as an arraignment of "capitalistic" society. But the guides all do. Even decent clothing in a painting is enough to start this verbal dart slinging, like children who have been "sicked on" to some one or some class by ill-bred and envious parents. Many of their gibes I could have thought of by myself, since I am naturally of a disrespectful disposition. But in the mouth of one of these naïve young girls they sound incongruous. You know she didn't think it up herself. Obviously, most guides learn their pieces by heart. I suppose Moscow's guide schools have a clever Communist who takes them over the tourist routes and tells them what to tell us, and what not to tell.

One soon gets the impression that they will tell the truth as long as they have not been told not to tell it. But pin them down on something they have been warned not to talk about and they play stupid or suddenly lose all knowledge of English. Driven out of that corner they will lie, with misgiving in their eyes. An older and more sophisticated man or woman might cover such a lie, but these naïve youngsters show it plainly in their faces. There are Russian-speaking

tourists in most groups too, and the average guide rests from her linguistic labors by doing as much as possible of her talking to them, leaving the rest of us out in the cold.

So you must find a way to talk with other people if you are to learn much of anything worth while during your Soviet journey, beyond what the other four senses tell you. I solved this problem by running into an unknown neighbor almost as soon as I reached Moscow, and continuing to run into him up to the morning I left Soviet territory. He was born in Russia; practices medicine now a little way down the Delaware from where I live. But he would give the Marx Brothers a run for their money on the stage and rival any foreign correspondent I know in gathering information and straining it through a shrewd Jewish mind imbued with an unusually clear-headed philosophy of life. I had only to bring up a question and he would forthwith buttonhole the first person within reach, man, woman, or child, policeman, soldier, or GPU official, and pump him thoroughly before allowing him to escape. He was far more useful than any interpreter I could have hired.

## CHAPTER III

### LENINGRAD

*It's an Ex-Capital . . . A "Factory Kitchen . . ."  
They're Museum Conscious*

LENINGRAD, exactly at sea-level, struck me as almost a commonplace dead-flat city with a few bulbous domes, golden, blue, gayly tiled fantastic onions above the rest, with also a very few bayonet-like spires. At least it cannot compete in delight to the traveler with that other equally flat and nearly as run-down ex-capital, Peiping. Except for its flocks of piloted tourists it didn't seem particularly different from many other slow and rather inefficient eastern European cities. But it has delightfully cool summer-resort weather, being 56.53 north. In fact, in the wind I sometimes regretted the light overcoat my habitually optimistic wife had vetoed as I grabbed my hat and ran for the steamer—especially as it had reached the stage where it would have disguised me as a Russian and its loss would have been no loss at all. Yet boys and girls were out in the streets barefoot—and as delighted at being unshod as my own children are in a place where summer is far warmer.

I am no night-hawk at home, but I couldn't seem to catch up with Russian time. Too fast a steamer, I suppose. So I astonished myself by being chipper



and wide-awake after midnight, and drowsy until noon. "It's a sleepy country anyway," foreign residents told me. "There seems to be a drug in the air." Perhaps that accounts for many things in the Russian temperament.

You could read ordinary newsprint outdoors at 11 at night on July 18. It was hardly dark at midnight, and daylight had come again before you realized it. The night view from the hotel-roof gallery showed very little electric light in the flat panorama of the city. I carried away an impression of empty streets; that is, few automobiles and not many horse vehicles, shepherded by white-clad policemen with stiff and earnest traffic manners. But there were constant streams of pedestrians, day or night. It was as if thousands were constrained for lack of shelter to "carry the banner." They say St. Petersburg had 750,000 "souls" before the revolution; Leningrad now claims 3,000,000—inhabitants. So it is mighty hard for a nontourist, especially for families, to get lodging, either overnight or more or less permanently. Most Leningrad residents live in quarters and conditions in startling contrast to my palatial room in the Hotel d'Europe. There would be a family or two in that much space outside tourist circles, and no one, unless perhaps one of the new aristocrats, a high government official, lives in any such splendor.

In theory at least, the Soviet citizen—or is it subject?—who earns a hundred rubles a month may live in the same building, even in identical rooms, with the man who earns a thousand. The general rule is to pay ten per cent of one's income for lodging; and fif-

teen square meters of housing space per person is the regular allotment. That means a little less than thirteen by thirteen feet to a person, and thousands of families must live, cook, eat, sleep, entertain, procreate and indulge in every human activity and need within the same room. Sometimes, even to-day, more than one family must share a single room, the ballroom, for instance, of some old palace, a room partitioned only by chalk marks, or a ragged curtain, if they can get one. In new apartment houses there is usually one bathroom on each floor; in newly constructed tenement houses a community kitchen. No wonder the influence of the home as well as of the church has been reduced. Home is a place to sleep, perhaps to eat; and to go to church is to risk at least ridicule.

"Chiselers" get much more than their share of living space, and unfortunates that much less, just as in capitalistic countries. I heard of a man who still lives in the big house he built before the revolution, in the fifteen square meters the law now allows him; and as no one else cares to live that far out in the country, the rest of his house is nailed up.

Why so many plateglass windows along Leningrad's principal street are broken, patched, held together in ingenious ways I can only guess; heavy traffic on what was once a swamp, perhaps, extreme heat and cold, little or no replacement since the riotous days of the revolution, buildings long empty, unrepaired, unattended. . . . That long stately Nevski Prospekt, by the way, is now the less stately Prospekt of October 25—because the tzarist régime was finally overthrown completely on November 7. What do you mean, you

don't understand? Certainly you remember that the old Russian calendar was thirteen days behind ours, which is now Russia's, officially. Religious people stick to the old one, secretly at least, as tenaciously as the Chinese masses do to their old outlawed moon calendar. The Russian peasant always reckoned time by the church feast days, and now that the week is gone and even the days of the month have been shifted forward, you can imagine how his bovine mind suffers.

Densely packed street-cars toil up the slight bridge approaches to the Neva. Peter I didn't want any bridges. He had a maniacal fear of them, and of course the mere convenience of the people didn't interest him. But there got to be too many people and there was too much ice—you can walk across the Neva five months of the year—so eventually St. Petersburg had to give up depending on boatmen and Peter his dream of a capital resembling Venice.

The emptiness of the big square before the Winter Palace, once infected with hordes of squatters, is almost gruesome. A policeman whistled me off it; I don't know why. He certainly could not have cared if I were disturbing the ghosts of tzarist days.

The Peter and Paul fortress must have been a comforting sight across the Neva from the Winter Palace windows. I have a friend who spent years in Peter and Paul and my picture of it was of the last word in dungeon suffering. Whereas Sing Sing would marvel at the size of its cells, and compared with many another of our prisons it was a palatial dwelling. Felt covered all except the *outer* walls of the cells. For it was not put there for the prisoners' comfort but to

keep them from tapping messages to one another. Thanks to the feltless wall, however, they talked freely with a simple Morse alphabet. An isolated cell between two corridors, where no tapping could be heard, was called "solitary" confinement.

Prisoners tapped with their backs to the vulnerable wall, because there was a "Judas' eye" in every cell door, through which guards who could not be seen from inside looked every few minutes. This ceaseless secret snooping drove some prisoners mad. In one cell is the picture of a "martyr" girl who burned herself to death from her kerosene lamp. But the man who tried to hang himself with a sheet tied to the foot of his cot was seen by guards and frustrated.

The cells of Peter and Paul are mere tourist show-places now, with the alphabet used by tappers posted on a corridor wall. Even to-day not all prisoners go to outdoor prison camps, but tourists are not invited to inspect dungeons and cells, wherever they are, that are still in use. To-day the prisoners in Peter and Paul are departed tzars and tzarinas, in marble tombs surmounted by gilded eagles in the fortress chapel, one of them disgracefully stripped of its marble covering and all the helpless inmates subjected to the scorn of guides armed with some facts and more misapprehensions of Russian history.

My second-day bus excursion in Leningrad was to a "kitchen factory," as guides and typewritten programs persist in calling it. I rather expected to see them turning out a dozen kitchens a minute. Instead, it was a factory kitchen, where thousands of workers' meals are prepared and served. There is electric cooking,

refrigerating rooms, all the things we already had in the United States a decade ago, but "wonderful" to the Russians and to the uninformed admirers of their régime from across the sea. Window dressing? Well, at least they were putting their best foot forward. We had to don white coats before we could inspect the place, though the flies were making holiday and any American child could have pointed out faults in sanitation.

Workers were quick to complain to us when they could find an interpreter who was above suspicion of being a stool-pigeon for the GPU. Three men surrounded two or three of us in the hallway and began bewailing the Soviet régime through a Jewish tourist born in Russia. Before they were well started, a woman in charge of excursions through the factory drifted swiftly up to us and silenced the men with the mere beginning of a sentence. A woman cooking in the big, fairly model kitchen found time to grumble in our ears that she only got sixty-eight rubles a month. "Good for one, bad for a hundred," she mumbled, in reversal of the Soviet motto, but a "comrade" interrupted a discussion that was beginning to be promising. In the back part of the large, airy, half-glass-walled workers' restaurant where the little people have their midday meal, a peasant-looking mother with a year-old baby on her lap tasted the soup the child refused to eat and made a grimace.

"It's sour," she told one of our tourist interpreters, "and I worked all day for that soup . . ."

A woman in the still-almost-white outer garb of the factory kitchen came up so quickly that she caught the

last word or two. The peasant-looking woman started like a child caught at serious mischief and began hastily to eat the soup herself.

Don't, however, for a moment let me leave the impression that a majority or even a large percentage of the clients (if that is the word) of this institution gave the impression of being disgusted, or even dissatisfied. All I had proof of is that there are some ready to complain when they get half a chance, and I agree fully with the phrase that issues so often from the mouths of guides in the USSR whenever any breath of complaint reaches their beloved tourists that "there are always soreheads in any large group." Just how many there are in the average group in the Soviet Union I don't believe Stalin himself knows for a certainty. The Taj Mahal is about the only thing I can remember seeing in many years of wandering the earth's surface that is virtually faultless, and that "kitchen factory" was a vast improvement over anything of the kind Russia had under the tzars, to say the least.

If Sovietland indulges in window dressing for foreign visitors, why are the guards in Leningrad's splendid galleries and museums wrecks of tired, patched, hungry, tubercular-looking old women, with safety-pins clinging to the fronts of their aged dresses, as if they were nursemaids in their other daily reincarnation? Sad-eyed women, with more than the sadness natural to such a job. But they are several times as argus-eyed and fussy about a visitor leaning an elbow on the corner of a showcase or touching a granite figure

with a timid forefinger as are museum guards in the rest of the world.

Some one in authority in the Soviet Union realizes the worth of good paintings. If it is true that many of the prerevolutionary masterpieces have been sacrificed to the ravenousness for *valuta*, Leningrad must have been almost the best art center in Europe before the revolution. For the Hermitage alone has a marvelous collection of paintings, and coupled with the Tetrakoff Gallery in Moscow it makes a journey to Russia almost imperative to the art lover. There are tennis courts for the nobility of to-day in the courtyard between the Hermitage and the Winter Palace, but the galleries and museums in them, the Tetrakoff, and all the rest, as far as I saw them, are as well-kept as any in Europe, even the rooms and the costly playthings of the tzars just as carefully preserved and well-guarded as such places or things are in any capitalistic country.

There is a realism and a truth to life in Russian paintings of before the debacle of the wealthy that makes the Louvre or the Pitti or Dresden or any other single collection in Europe seem to lack something. Perhaps the added pleasure of novelty and surprise is warping my judgment, but if I were allowed only one more visit to the galleries of Europe I'd make tracks for the Hermitage and the Tetrakoff. Nor would I pass by the Russian Museum which faced my hotel window in Leningrad. Those three marvelous water paintings by Aiwasowsky, for instance, if I have the name right, would add cubits to the stature of any gallery.

There is at least one old-school painter left in Leningrad, who wanted three thousand rubles for the very presentable copy he was making of the famous painting of the Volga Boatmen. Art, in the USSR, after being struck to earth along with the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie that patronized it, seems to be slowly improving and groggily crawling up toward the plane of art again. Such exhibits as that of the Red Army in Kiev, for instance, are still mainly if not entirely mere propaganda. But there are paintings there that show the hazy beginnings of a realization of something better than mere good drawing with a Soviet moral. Artists are to be developed from the worker class, like the other professions and a new intelligentsia, and that takes time. Here and there in the post-revolutionary exhibits are signs that the task may be long but not impossible.

Realism is at its zenith in the commonplace paintings of Lenin and his group at Smolny and kindred places. They leave out nothing, show empty coffee cups, the tube ends of consumed cigarettes in ashtrays, open boxes of matches, spots on the tablecloth, if there is a tablecloth. In all the pictures I saw of this group (all painted since 1928) Trotsky is shown modestly in the background, sometimes with only half his face visible in a far corner, which is probably not true to real life during those early revolutionary meetings.

Go through any of Sovietland's old picture galleries or museums thoughtfully and observantly and even the pictures will help to explain why Communism came to Russia. Guides point out the more obvious evidences of this to foreign tourists; even less nearly well-dressed



men and women lecture on them to endless files and milling groups of "workers" and their children. Galleries and museums are really for the workers, the masses, the rank and file of all ages, in the USSR. Not merely unshaven workmen but even ragged, barefoot boys and girls are welcomed, treated without even a shadow of that questioning glance doorkeeper and guards would flash upon such visitors in other lands.

In Museums of the Revolution coatless, even shirtless workers pilot workers' children open-mouthed with ignorance from exhibit to exhibit, telling them things to make them "class conscious." There is something incongruous in the incessant urge to make people "class conscious" in a "classless society." They show them gold toy trains and Easter eggs set with diamonds and all the other expensive useless things the tzar's family gave one another in a vain effort to keep up with their incomes, things they quickly tired of, just as rich children everywhere soon relegate their expensive toys to the attic. Of course the capitalistic world would retort, "They supported the workers by having them make those jeweled Easter eggs, didn't they?" But it is an argument that would make slight impression on these badly dressed and rather hungry-looking children of workers and peasants.

Nowhere in the world, as far as I know it, are museums and galleries so densely crowded with endless throngs as in the USSR. But I noticed that far more of these proletarian visitors stopped longer to study the murder exhibits of the Red Revolution than to look at the fine paintings, even that arresting canvas of Ivan the Terrible killing his son.

Out at Peterhof, the Russian Versailles, the marvelous fountains usually play only late in the afternoon now. Tzarskoye Selo ("Tzar's Village") long the imperial summer resort, has become Dyetskoye Selo ("Children's Village"), the walls of its magnificent halls of state still encrusted with blended amber or lined with Old Masters and rare tapestries, the floors inlaid mosaics of mother-of-pearl, but almost all its palaces and villas turned to hospitals and homes and schools for "workers'" children, which one need not be a Communist to admit is an improvement over the old order.

## CHAPTER IV

### SOVIET GHQ

*I Move to Moscow . . . Street Scenes . . . The Feet Have It . . . A Marriage and Divorce Bureau . . . Yes, There Is Some Night Life . . . Wild Boys . . . Two Jewish Sisters . . . Parlor Pinks*

МОСКВА, as the Russians call it, was distinctly warmer than Leningrad; from my second day there on it was uncomfortably hot. There had been many woods, few stops, peasant hawkers selling such delicacies as strawberries at the stations all through the short night on that twelve-hour train ride, with Shelf 20 to myself, from the old to the new capital. Or is it the other way about? For here was the great city that, in spite of the upstart we oldsters still remember best as St. Petersburg, has always been the heart and soul of Russia, once more come into its own after a lapse of two hundred years.

As to the impression it leaves—aside from those miles of bus-ride over cobbles from the station to the Ново Московская, the new Moscow Hotel (which isn't, particularly) overlooking the Moskba River and the Kremlin, where we sat down to "breakfast" on the roof at 12:45!—I beg leave to lean back and paraphrase a report by one of our best-known newspaper

correspondents there: “. . . a dilapidated city thirteen years ago, roadways and houses alike crumbling to pieces, water-mains, heating, lighting failed, stovepipes protruding from every window, hardly a store that was not boarded up, very little traffic in the streets except a crowd hanging like a swarming of bees to each dingy street-car [for a while after the revolution street-car rides were free, which is my idea of Communism], the people everywhere ragged and idle. Gangs made life a terror; the death penalty was exacted for petty theft; there were crowds of beggars about the churches, which were found on every corner; the population had been reduced to less than half what it was before the revolution. Even in the Savoy Hotel there was almost no furniture, no bedding, no food, no sanitation except a hard-won pitcher of hot water, rats and vermin everywhere. . . .

“To-day the ruins have disappeared. Every vacant lot is bright with grass and flowers [?]. The main streets and squares are smoothly paved; there are traffic signals and traffic cops; important buildings are arising everywhere; the existing edifices have been cleaned and refurbished and extra stories have been added to thousands of them. The population is twice what it was before the revolution, the building program is at last catching up with the demand [and there are signs that they will profit by New York's tragic example and not wantonly overdo it]. The traffic is so dense they are building a subway, but it is well controlled by policemen in white at every important corner. . . . The only thing that is the same are the

street-cars, or rather the appearance they give of masses of people rolling along the street.

"Both the people and the cars themselves look better now. Their dress still compares unfavorably with Western capitals, but they look healthy and cheerful. Stores are backward in quantity and quality of goods, but there is no unemployment [?] in Moscow. . . . The former garden of Theater Square in the center of the city has become a mass of wooden buildings for a central railway station, while in the place of lines of little peddlers' shacks two huge new hotels, each still encased in the woodwork spider-web required by the Russian building system, are nearing their twelve stories of completion."

On the other hand, a wealthy young cookie-pusher who came to Moscow with the new American Embassy crowd says, "The streets were jammed with sad-looking people against a background of scrawny buildings that fairly screamed for attention." Both these reports are honest and sincere, and both are right. It all depends on the point of view, which stems from previous experience and obvious points of comparison.

In the outskirts Moscow has log houses (peeled logs), wooden houses, stucco houses. But henceforth no houses may be built of wood. Instead, there are long rows of workmen's apartment houses built of brick. There are shops, parks or the beginnings of parks, theaters at least in embryo, and some day there will be a stadium in each district. But to-day rough cobbled or uneven dirt streets roam almost all the outskirts, even among the new brick apartment houses for

workmen. There is not a lawnmower in Moscow, so wherever there is grass it suggests the untrimmed Russian beards beloved of cartoonists.

In the center of town, the Moscow of Napoleon's time, there is a vast amount of building and rebuilding; huge structures completely covered with that network of scaffolds characteristic of Russian building. The new buildings are massive, rectangular, severe, the embodiment of the directness and force and uncompromising seriousness of the new Government and a startling contrast to the churches of wood and stone, the red and blue and green spires, the fantastic towers and turnip domes of former Russian architecture. To the casual observer who has seen skyscrapers spring up in New York, Moscow's building does not seem to advance at vertiginous speed. But no doubt compared with building in tzarist times the present rate is incredible.

The old Chinese Wall which enclosed the heart of the city for six centuries has now been torn down. Its narrow gates will no longer obstruct traffic; a wide boulevard, already planted with young trees, takes its place. The famous old Sukharevsky Tower, long a landmark, had just been demolished in record time, as an interference to modern traffic, when I reached Moscow. But—and this is symbolical of the whole problem in the USSR—the moment it was down the workers fell into their natural dawdling pace in cleaning up the débris. The task of the Kremlin, or whatever is the hide-out of the moment of the little group that really rules Russia, is not merely to work up enthusiasm, but to keep it burning.

Moscow claims 3,500,000 population to-day (in pessimistic or boastful moments she may even say 4,000,000) as against Leningrad's 3,000,000, and a great Duke's mixture of population it is. Tanned Mongols from Siberia, Cossacks, Tartars, peasants from the four corners of the Union, Uzbeks from Samarcand, Buriats from the plains of Mongolia fill the seething streets, and besides these there are samples of foreigners from perhaps every land on the globe: a Hindu in Englishman's garb smoking his pipe and showing in his face or manner that he prefers equality here to his favorite climate and British snubs in Bombay, a negro from Georgia who eyes a passing group of American tourists as if verbally on the defensive, a pair of unobtrusive but argus-eyed Japanese . . .

In time of great changes people flock to the capital and metropolis the world over, feeling greater safety in numbers, heartened under discouragement by the contact with their fellowman in the mass. Besides, the Government has been steadily sucking peasants into the factories; and even in a Communistic State, if one ever comes, people will come a-running for government jobs. So for all her recent and on the whole competent building Moscow still has a housing crisis.

Day or night the streets of Moscow are filled with people. I never was able to find out where they were all going or what they intended to do when they got there, and nobody else seemed to know. It is a restless, surging population, always in the same ferment. I suppose it is on the streets for the same reason that the denizens of New York's doss houses so often are,

because it is more nearly pleasant to roam them, even aimlessly, than to stay in their cheap lodgings. All means of transport, including feet, are so crowded that you come to suspect it is mere random wandering in the vain quest of happiness.

The chaos of the streets is incredible, myriads of people bumping their way back and forth along them. They are geniuses at stopping for a chat in narrow places, doorways, tight corners, when there is plenty of room two steps farther on. They never seem to think of the convenience of the other fellow, not because they are more selfish than the average run of people—probably less so—but because they have never stopped to think—but only to talk, gaze, idle. But then, nearly all Europe's sidewalk manners are atrocious.

Pedestrians swarm in the principal streets of every large city in the USSR, every form of transportation is perpetually crowded. The extremely crowded sidewalks, where there are sidewalks, make progress on foot a feat, a constant effort; and in Europe there has never been a sharp distinction between sidewalk and pavement. On the street at least true Communism reigns, every man—and woman—for himself, and starvation catch the hindmost. Walking becomes a bumping match, like those bumping cars in our Coney Islands and county fairs, though without the same good nature and hilarity.

Most people walk for the simple reason that the tram-cars are so overcrowded it is impossible for any but the most agile to get a toe- and handhold on the outside of them. Packed to suffocation and beyond



the danger point, a Russian street-car looks more often than not like a compact mass of human beings creeping slowly along, like a tumbleweed, a Russian thistle rolling before the wind. The cars usually run (walk would be more exact) in twos and threes, coupled together, crowds hanging on everywhere, even where there seems to be no possible place to hang, in a constant fight for the survival of the fittest. Behind them all squat two, three, as many as four boy hoboos on the protruding coupling or the suggestion of a back bumper. You wonder whether those on the inside ever leave and if so, how; or whether they are sentenced perpetually to ride through the streets because, once having entered the tram, they cannot fight their way out through the clusters of humanity hanging like bunches of grapes on the outside. Women so tired that they fall asleep in the street-cars bear out this impression, or give that of having decided to make the most of the seat they have found at last.

I tried riding some of the less crowded of these rolling masses of humanity and managed to get away with it. But it means reverting to the hardy football tactics of a harder day, particularly as you must, on rather imminent danger of arrest, enter at the back and fight your way to the front door, through people so dirty they visibly soil the wooden seats, before dismounting. It is all very fine for pickpockets; and how I managed to see only one serious street-car accident in the USSR is beyond me.

That one was in Tiflis. I was strolling along, hardly conscious of the string of street-cars rolling up parallel with me, when I suddenly heard a woman scream. A

man had apparently lost his hold on the side of the front car and when I first caught sight of him he was being rolled over and over like a rubber tire beneath the edge of the first of the three cars. It happened that workmen were digging a trench for sewer or water pipes just there, and the long mound of earth served perfectly to keep the victim down under the edge of those three coupled cars. Certainly he made twenty revolutions alongside the wheels before he finally emerged at the back just as the motorman caught the alarm and brought his train to a stop. He landed right-end up, that is, sitting up, like one of those *darumas* which Japanese children use as toys, held up the bleeding stump of a leg and another of what had been an arm, and *began to sing*, in that peculiarly melancholic strain common to Georgian music.

The sight of flowing blood has more horror for me than a charging lion; and anyway, less squeamish or more courageous people were flocking about him from all sides. So I hurried on without verifying my conviction that he must have lost the other hand and foot as well, if nothing worse, sure only of the gruesome mutilation of a young Georgian whose garb proclaimed that without hands and feet he could hardly hope ever again to earn a livelihood. Probably he died; at least I hope so. But that sort of thing is not "news" in the vocabulary of Soviet journalism, so I can give no final report.

Half the street-cars in Moscow, in most Russian cities, are run by women, most of them dressed and built like peasants, a few fairly young, slender and good-looking. Now and then the approaching car dis-

closes a beautiful blond motor "man," an' no foolin', so captivating that she takes away all thoughts of your destination. Not the same can be said, as far as my luck carried, of the switch-woman who sits on a kind of folding campstool at every important street-car junction in Moscow, or of those other women who are constantly sweeping the principal streets with those bundle-of-fagots brooms common in many more parts of the world than the aristocratic broom-corn variety.

There are splendid trolley buses now out a wide, well-paved boulevard to Moscow's biggest aviation-field, and they are building a fourteen-kilometer subway. But quicksands and an underground river make this a difficult and dangerous job not only to the diggers but to the city, a large section of which, engineers say, threatens to collapse if the digging continues. In other words, the Metrostroy may destroy the city. Still, the cables tell us they ran a trial train of two or three cars, just like those in New York, in October and they promise that underground travel will begin early in 1935.

The subway will be eighteen miles long. Its shafts and loading stations seem to dominate the city, occupy every public square and most of the vacant lots. Floodlights play upon these points at night, as toil goes on continuously in three shifts. Forty per cent of the 70,000 subway diggers are women. Husky girls clump along in heavy boots and mud-smeared overalls through the Red capital at all hours of the day or night. Engineers in skirts holding up traffic with their transits as they run levels along the main street is too common a sight to excite comment.

There is many times more wheeled traffic in Moscow than in Leningrad, wildly driven automobiles, endless horn-blowing, as little respect for pedestrians as in any capitalistic country, despite the fact that no automobiles are for sale to private individuals. To-day Moscow has 27,000 motor cars and trucks—not many compared with Chicago, whose same ratio would give Moscow 300,000, but 1,000 percent increase over two years ago. Horse traffic is no longer allowed in many of the principal streets. White-clad policemen—the policemen of Russia were put in white coats and helmets, even white gloves, in time to appear in style in the last scenes of the Chelyuskin picture, Sovietland's principal bid to film fame that summer—very snappily direct traffic at all important intersections. There are traffic lights in all Sovietland's large cities, manipulated by policeman hand from the sidewalk. In Moscow they have a peculiar type of traffic light that suggests initiative, ingenuity, and effective home production. It has the face of a big clock, painted red, yellow, and green, with an arrow constantly moving around it. Bicycles, of Russian make, are numerous, but especially and everywhere and at all hours the streets are crowded with jostling pedestrians.

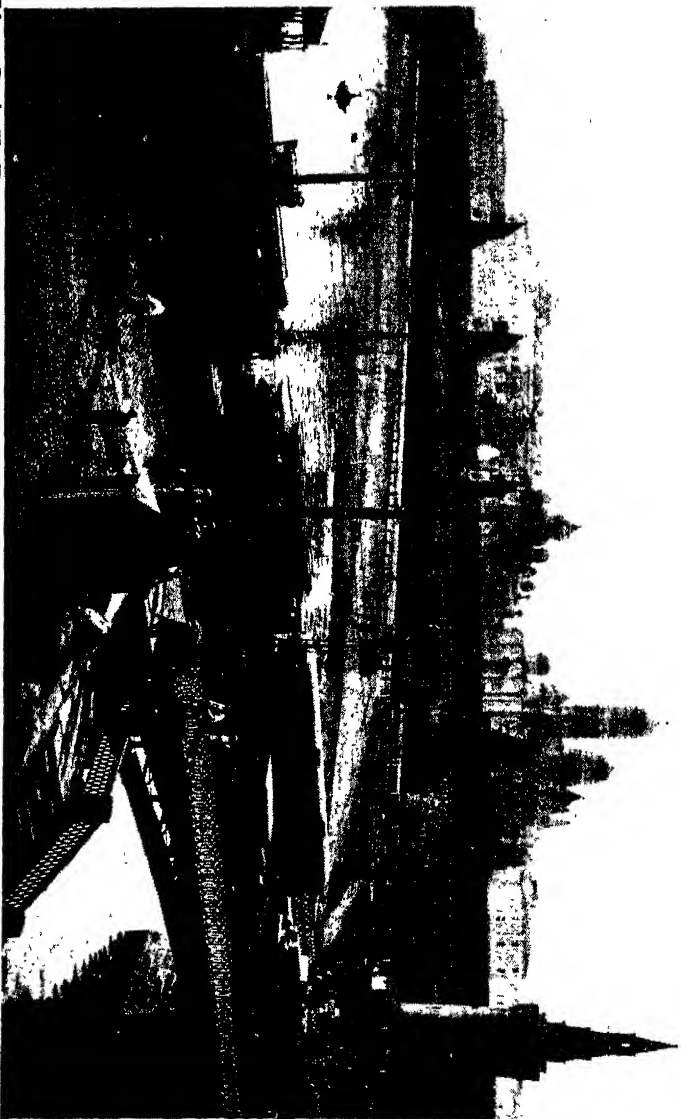
It took me all my first full day in Leningrad to figure out what the heavily armed and well-uniformed young men in riding breeches with nothing to ride were doing just off the sidewalks of the Prospekt of the 25th of October, strutting back and forth and every little while blowing the whistle that sends chills up the automobile-driver's back. No, it was not Leningrad's scanty cars that were being imperiously ordered over

to the curb. The whistling was for pedestrians who attempted to cross the Prospekt at the wrong time or in the wrong place, as if there were not automobiles enough to let these strutting young men in unmounted riding breeches show their full importance and mastery of the whistle. I saw half a dozen people called upon to produce their "documents" and begin to think up their alibis before I realized that the traffic cops of Russia give much attention to arresting jay-walkers and fining them on the spot. Which reminds me that many jay-walkers are killed in Moscow, where there seems to be more of the spirit of laissez faire toward the throngs that take their lives in hand.

One evening in Rostov-on-Don one of two white-clad policemen manipulating a traffic light suddenly sprang into the street whistling as if he had received the riot call. A murder at least, I told myself, perhaps even a loaf of bread stolen from a government store. But no, it was a young woman who had boarded a street-car after it had started! Furious whistling brought the three-car tram-train to a halt, the young woman was unceremoniously dragged off it and led, with a lecture, back to the raised safety island to wait for the next car in her direction . . . which came along so suddenly that she caught that too beyond a dead halt. The policeman, raising his whistle halfway to his lips, let it fall again with a "nitchevo!" a "what's-the-use" gesture. In Kiev, on my last evening in the USSR, policemen were still parading the middle of the principal street, scanning the passports and collecting one-, two-, sometimes five-ruble fines right on the spot from impatient pedestrians. Human nature . . . well,

*Photo © A. K. Dawson*

The Kremlin From the New Moscow Hotel.





A "Printer's Devil"—Soviet Style.



Photo © Frank J. Griffin  
Mild Examples of Sovietland's  
Decreasing "Wild Boys."

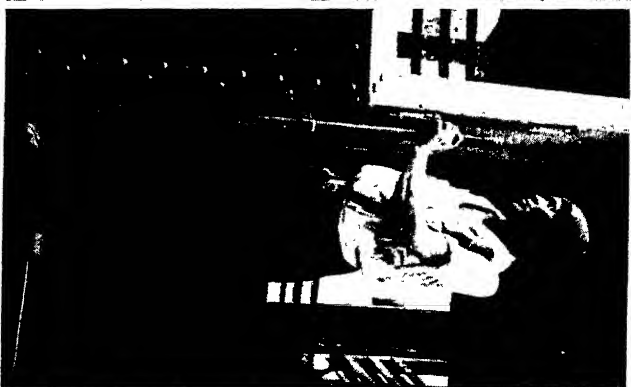


Photo © Frank J. Griffin  
A Street-Car Conductor—Soviet Style.

the Soviet authorities may be right that it can be changed, but not overnight.

I went to church on my second day in Moscow, for something reminded me that it was Sunday. But I was back in time to follow the crowd to a *zags*. We call it a Marriage and Divorce Bureau, but they also register babies there. It was not a court, but a simple room, twelve feet by seven perhaps, conveniently located on the ground-floor-front of a prerevolutionary building. The seats for spectators or waiting clients that half filled it were empty when we arrived. But a man and wife were sitting amicably side by side at the table in the other half, facing just such a woman as you find in government bureaus in other lands, oldish, chair-weary, disillusioned, a kind of bureaucratic automaton.

I said man and wife, but I am not sure whether they were that by the time we entered. Something in their faces told us at once that they were being unmarried rather than married. At any rate, dissolution had taken place and the chair-weary woman had handed them their decree by the time we reached the rail. It was a sleazy form on the flimsiest kind of paper; a little larger than a postcard, its blanks filled in with spreading ink. The marriage certificates-to-be in the other pile beside the woman functionary were of the same size and material, paper that would certainly wear out in two weeks of ordinary use and disintegrate in a month or two in a safety-box, paper symbolical of marriage and divorce in the Soviet Union.

The pair had come to an agreement unaided. She



was to keep the two children; he was to provide a hundred rubles a month for their support—the same unfair division as under capitalism. Otherwise there would have to have been something verging on official or court proceedings to bring about such an agreement. If either of them had come alone he would have had to pay two rubles instead of the one each that still lay on the table before them. A sound of distress behind me localized itself in the throat of a large and comely woman tourist. She was a lawyer from Chicago, gasping at the outrageous thought of any one getting a divorce “without a lawyer getting at least fifty dollars out of it.” The extra ruble from a single petitioner is the fee for notifying the divorced party, by printed postal card or a notice of divorce posted in the common lodging, unless more direct service is convenient. When a man or a woman comes home from work and does not find his helpmeet, he looks about to see if he has been divorced during the day. Often the other party is still there. For the fly in the molasses is that a pair may be divorced and still obliged to inhabit the same room, since new lodgings are not easily available.

The interpreter-chauffeur, speaking excellent English and a man of parts, of a foreign business man I met in Moscow was still living in the same room with the wife who had divorced him, or vice versa, three months before. “I don’t so much mind losing a husband,” cried the offended wife in a Peoples’ Court proceeding in a case we would call “alienation of affection” which I attended, “but I don’t want to lose my lodging!” Sometimes there is only a double bed. Sometimes the new wife, and for all I know the new husband, may be

brought in. Then what? I regret to say I didn't find time to carry my investigations that far.

The two chairs had no time to cool before another couple slipped into them. Here was something different, obviously, from the mere look on their faces. Besides, the girl was fresh and young and pretty, with none of the wear and tear of matrimony and maternity and disillusionment in her countenance. Yes, they wished to be married. The chair-weary bureaucrat reached a tired hand toward the pile of blank marriage certificates, began to ask unimportant questions as she filled in one of them. The groom paid two rubles. The girl slipped the flimsy certificate into something she carried in lieu of handbag. The ceremony was over and the participants gone. It would have taken longer to renew a driver's license in America.

The woman at the table, waiting wearily for new custom or word from the clock to shut up shop, assured us it would be physically quite possible for a married man (or woman, of course) to come with a new fiancée and be unmarried and remarried and gone within ten minutes. In lands where minds and pens work more rapidly than in Russia that time could be cut in two.

Oh, yes, querying reader, even you can be married, and perhaps divorced, in a *zags*. They tell me one of the secretaries in our Embassy in Moscow married an American girl (from the Follies, at that) in the Red capital. It would have cost him only two rubles if his canny bride had not insisted on a less flimsy certificate that cost three extra rubles. A marriage according to the laws of any country with which we have diplomatic

relations is legal in the United States, it seems, if it is registered in an American consulate; and although our Supreme Court has not yet given its final opinion on the subject, lesser authorities hold that a Soviet divorce would probably also be held binding. The line forms at the right.

Why marriage at all? There is no illegitimacy in the USSR, not much of anything to inherit, no public opinion worth worrying about against irregular unions. Well, I suppose some sort of ceremony is a sop to old-fashioned minds. Besides, it is easier to pin the support of the child on an officially registered father. The best reason I heard, since the income can hardly more than cover the expense of maintaining the bureau, was that only an actual wife can use her mate's card for purchases in the shops where he is entitled to lower prices.

Russian wives may continue to use their own names or take that of their husbands, as they choose. Since great numbers of them have their own jobs when they marry, many prefer, like our actresses, to keep their own names. Besides, the Russian custom in this matter was never just what ours is.

There is no word for adultery in the Soviet legal code, although seduction is a major crime. Yet the stable-minded will not jump to the conclusion that the 160,000,000 or so living under the Red banner are constantly changing their mates. There is ample evidence, even in the streets, that the great majority of couples cling together through thick and thin, and mighty thin it is at times, too. Besides, about the time a man or woman walks into a *zags* and asks for

a third or a fourth divorce he is warned that this thing has gone about far enough and that he had better be pretty sure of his choice next time. Sovietland has proved that ease of divorce and marriage does not do away with fixed affections. To the casual observer the simplicity of *zags* formalities seems an improvement rather than the reverse of the custom in lands where marriage chains, when they become chains, are so difficult to strike off.

The "Abortion Center" was "under reparations," though I had it all fixed up to pose as a physician. I missed the Proflactorium by choice, when I heard that it is little more than a reform school for bad and rather stupid girls, at least as far as what tourists see is concerned. Instead, I stood two hours on a hot corner watching for the funeral in Red Square—the Soviet ambassador in Paris had been sent home in an urn and lay in state in a big new building facing the square—without realizing that the mere showing of my foreign passport would probably have got me inside the police lines that were so like valves to the rest of the population.

That evening Intourist took us for a ride. That is, there was a special concert-dancing program arranged for a large cruise party that had been allowed to run up to Moscow (most of them, I mean; I know of one Catholic priest who was not and one Swedish noble who was not even allowed ashore) to which those of us mere tourists wealthy and simple enough to pay *valuta* admission to the tune of 1.50 "gold" rubles were invited. It was a very good performance. The

master of ceremonies wore faultless full evening dress, the women singers also, and the male pianists were in dinner jackets; but there was not a Russian in the audience. I don't suppose the box-office would have accepted paper rubles. They must have taken in at least \$1,500 of their beloved *valuta*; and if the expenses were \$150 I'm a Mohammedan.

Those with the time and the flair for such things say there is still some night life, even genuine gypsy music, in Moscow, if you know where to look for it. But as far as the night life for tourists goes, the famous Hotel Metropole, which travel agency folders cite as the place where foreign residents revel by night when they do not care or dare to go home, had been at least temporarily killed by tourists. My old college mate took me there for a midnight dinner, only to find that instead of a packed and hilarious throng in a dining-room which rivals the Waldorf-Astoria in its material aspects and outdoes it in perfection of service, we found no one whatever except a very drunken Consul-General and First Secretary of a country you know very well, two or three correspondents in the same condition, and more of their wives than was quite safe for their marital reputations staggering about now and then in a dance and hurrying back to the bar. My friend was aghast, but the mystery solved itself the moment he asked for the menu.

"But this is the *valuta* menu!"

On the head waiter's face could be read as easily as in newspaper headlines the following information:

"Yes, I know you are an old and respected customer, who will wonder why I am so stupid or so grasping

as to hand you a list of prices in foreign money. Of course you have always paid in rubles. But—you don't really believe me so thick-skulled or so head-waiterish as to hand you a *valuta* menu if there was any way out of it . . . ?"

What he said in words amounted to a brief announcement that the ruble menu had been suspended, that no one could eat in the Metropole, until further notice, without paying real money for the privilege.

Yes, he agreed perfectly: no wonder the dining-room was empty, his phalanx of waiters in faultless capitalistic garb looking sadly at their empty palms. He agreed even to the point of as nearly joining the guffaws of my friend as is ever permitted a head waiter when on duty. I wondered, being then still entirely unsophisticated in the Russian scene, why a manager or some one didn't rush forward and order my friend not to talk about the difference between *valuta* and the rubles all foreigners long resident in the USSR always use, right here where scores of tourists might overhear him.

They understood each other so well that there was no need to put into words the explanation that the Metropole was full of Intourist "guests" and that it seemed much better to lose the ruble trade for a while rather than let so many spendthrift foreigners see with their own eyes that paper rubles can be used in good hotels. Obviously the discrimination against rubles would be removed as soon as tourists began to thin out; otherwise the phalanx of waiters in faultless capitalistic garb would have turned an even more wobegone communal countenance out upon the splen-

diferous spaciousness of the Metropole dining-room.

We dined there anyway. My old friend is no backer-out; besides, if we had served the management right and walked out on their *valuta*-emptied magnificence we could probably never quite have outlived the grief in those waiters' eyes. I doubt whether we could have found a better dinner in New York; and come to figure it up, when I insisted out of curiosity, it cost less than twice as much as it would have in rubles.

There were ragged boys enough in the streets to catch the attention, a few tattered girls too, the day I came to Moscow. Some of them were cautiously begging from tourists about the New Moscow Hotel, some were sleeping in the sunshine under the feet of pedestrians on the adjoining bridge over the Moskba River. Ragged is a trite and feeble word with which to describe those homeless children who may still be seen here and there in the Soviet Union. Take a boy with nothing but his animal instincts to guide him, and dress him in the oldest, most disreputable garments your grandfather left in his attic, then let him live in the streets and back alleys, sleep in abandoned stables and on outdoor manure heaps, search for edible garbage everywhere, ride the rods on oil-trains, in those same garments for years, tying them together with strips of rag where they begin to fall apart, and you may come somewhere near visualizing what the lost children of Sovietland look like. They all seem to wear adult clothing, hitched up and turned back to give their limbs something like free play; and they are always winter garments at that, layer after noisome

layer of them, even on the hottest days. Nowhere to store them for the summer, I suppose, or perhaps outdoor sleeping is not so warm even when the sun shines twenty hours a day over Leningrad and eighteen over Moscow. Besides, they have no confidence in their fellow-men, these wandering urchins, and no means of knowing whether they will ever get back to any place they leave.

They were quickly cleaned up out of our sight, evidently run off the streets before the big Swedish cruise ship brought an unusual influx of unusually finicky visitors next day. They say the authorities do their best to put them in camps or children's rest homes, but that they run away at every opportunity. They ride under the trains, to Moscow and Leningrad in the summer, southward in the winter. Oil-trains, by the way, are the best for hoboing in Sovietland, much faster than passenger-trains—though you may need a shine and a brush-up when you get there. Passports or travel permits mean nothing to them. They make up a goodly proportion of the street-car hoboes who are a feature of Soviet cities, sometimes four, even five of them on a back bumper. But there is nothing like as many of them to-day, nor as reckless little savages among them, as travelers in other years reported.

In Moscow I met two Jewish sisters born in Latvia when it was ruled by the czar. Both married chemical engineers. One couple emigrated to the United States; the other chose to remain in Russia, until it was too late. The sister who now returned as a tourist was housed in the sumptuous Hotel d'Europe in Leningrad



and the Savoy in Moscow, had all the advantages of a foreign visitor under the wing of Intourist. She and her husband, as office manager and outside man respectively, had put their children through Harvard and Radcliffe. She was genuinely cultured, despite an atrocious foreign accent, well-dressed, able to travel to Europe. Her sister, raking and scraping enough rubles, struggling for official permission, and fighting her way at last into a train, came from Moscow to meet her, dressed like a peasant, a kerchief over her head, her shoes long overdue on the garbage-heap.

In the early days of the Soviet régime her husband had tried too long to hang on to his business. He had spent eight months in prison, painful months, most of them. She had been put in a torture chamber, heated now to near the boiling-point, now cooled to well below freezing, in an effort to make her admit that she and her husband had hidden somewhere far more than the \$340 they admitted possessing. Twenty-five days of this broke her nerve, made her an old woman, still subject to frightful nightmares, still starting fit to crack her bones at any unexpected noise. The rest of her four months' imprisonment, after the authorities had concluded she was telling the truth, had been in a model prison. Now, after "adjusting" themselves, both she and her husband have government jobs—that's all the jobs there are in Sovietland. She teaches music under Soviet auspices. You wouldn't suspect it, to see her. He gives a government factory the benefit of his training, wends his threadbare way home to their thirty square meters of tenement floor-space each evening. "We manage in all matters except clothing," she as-

served. But there was that in her eye which implied that pride and fear kept her from telling much, even to her sister. Queer contrasts life can make of two beings starting from the same point of vantage.

I don't know exactly what to call them, those spouty soap-boxers among our fellow-American visitors to the USSR, those mental Bolsheviks with good American teaching jobs and the like in the United States, who begin singing the *Internationale* when the train reaches the Soviet border, who hasten to wear smocks, those Russian white embroidered shirts outside the trousers. But for want of a better word I shall call them "parlor pinks," though it does not fit especially well. They arouse an antagonism against the very régime they come to praise, make one's semi-acquiescence in some of the Communists' criticism of capitalistic society, one's agreement with some of the Soviet activities, begin to evaporate.

We have many of the same things in the United States for which they shout praises to Leninism, only better. But the parlor pinks are too ignorant of their own country to know it. So they think Russia is "Just wonderful!" Our society has its faults, heaven knows, but as far as accomplishment goes to date, this Communist panacea is worse. Yet parlor pinks are ready to jump at a remedy which so far has been worse than the disease. Their half-baked pæans and omnibus acceptance of anything sired under the Red flag makes one doubly skeptical of any virtues one may have begun to discern beneath the uninviting exterior of Communism. Their assurance that it is only a matter of

time, a very brief time, before the United States will take Marx and Lenin for its prophets, fills one with increased dread for such a day, if such as they are the stuff of which our future rulers are to be made.

The fixed ideas on both sides become tiresome. One longs for some one who can see and hear, and smell and taste, instead of people who seal their senses in a vacuum before they come, some one who at least tries to judge this very different world on its own merits instead of condemning or wolfing it whole. One must pound on the obvious in talking to parlor pinks, and even then it is a wanton waste of time. There is too much heat, anyway, about differences of opinion, too little calm, unprejudiced investigation. Parlor pinks, at least the great majority of those one must endure in a tourist party in Russia, are obviously the types who would fail in any society. The composite picture would be dreamy eyes above a smock or open-necked shirt or its female counterpart, incapable hands protruding from its sleeves. My own experience among them is that the females are worse than the males. Parlor pinks in general, but especially the women, take pleasure in smoking, in being blasphemous, in deliberately flouting the common courtesies in famous old churches that have now become anti-religious museums. Half-baked people, most of them speaking English with an accent; and you conclude there is no use paying any attention to them. But the trouble is, the half-baked usually inherit the earth, as they have in Russia. One longs to stamp their passports with some of their fulminations against the land that feeds them so well that they can spend a summer so far from home. Bar-

ring that, parlor pinks should be soundly spanked and sentenced to read American and world history and works on human behavior. But even then they would not be cured, for it takes a modicum of common sense to digest facts as plain as the wart on your nose.

I don't know whether it is because Leningrad and Moscow suffice to confirm their fixed ideas or whether they get miraculously cured; but it is noticeable that you see far fewer parlor pinks in the southern parts of the USSR. If only they would keep their mouths shut more often, one could more fairly appraise those things in the Soviet scheme that are unquestionably worth any country's time to consider. Pin them down with the stock test question, "But would you rather live here than in the United States?" and they reply unctuously, "Yes, I would be very happy here—spiritually." But one notes that they all use the return half of their tickets.

## CHAPTER V

### STILL IN MOSCOW

*Working Hours . . . Rest Days . . . Let's Drop  
Factories . . . Where's Your Briefcase? . . .  
Yes, Inside the Kremlin . . . Seeing Lenin*

IT is a queer sensation at first to wake up on a Sunday morning and find it a week-day as usual, especially to be waked by factory whistles, rumbling trucks, and all the noises known to workmen. But I assume one soon gets used to it. For even foreign residents in Sovietland never know the day of the week, unless they happen to have had to look it up to avoid bombarding the home office with cables on a Sunday. Perhaps it is a still more surprising sensation to wake up on a week-day and find it a Sunday; to see barber-shops crowded to suffocation on a Sunday evening because the next day happens to be a "free day."

For a time, you may remember, Sovietland tried staggering her holidays, giving one-fifth of the population every fifth day off. *A priori* that should be an excellent plan, at least in a land where Sundays have been abolished. One-fifth as many parks, playgrounds, places of indoor entertainment would be needed, far fewer transportation facilities—I hardly need go through all the list of advantages. But the chaos resulting from such a plan should also be obvious. If you

went to see a man in his office you probably found it was his day off. Man and wife, both working, and sometimes the children too, never could get out together because they all had different "rest days."

Whatever else may be said of the powers that reign over the USSR, they are adaptable. Precedent does not burden them. They are frankly experimenting, and capable of scrapping an experiment when it fails. So now, with the exception of some factories and other institutions that can best be operated on the earlier plan, every date of the month that is divisible by six is a "free day" for every one. Shops and stores nearly all keep open, which is an advantage to the majority over our Sunday. The streets, the street-cars, the parks are more densely thronged than on other days; the railway trains would be if that were physically possible. But at least no one feels that he is going off into the woods to have a good time by himself while every one else is at work, which as you probably know is very much like trying to lift yourself by your own boot-straps.

When a month has thirty-one days the next holiday is obviously a week later, which sometimes makes the "free day" coincide with Sunday twice running. March 1 is a free day, to take up the slack left by February; the first three days of May (or April 30 instead of May 3) are free days; so are New Year's Day and November 7 and 8, in memory of the "October" revolution under the old calendar. March 8 is a holiday for women only.

The working day in most industries is now seven hours, with an hour off for rest and lunch, which

amounts to an eight-hour day as far as presence in the place of employment is concerned. Sometimes there is a ten-minute rest period every hour. "Workers" get a month's vacation, with pay, each year. Extra-hard workers sometimes get forty days. "White collar workers" (how absurd the term seems in the USSR!) get two weeks' paid vacation yearly. In other words the great mass of workers get ninety-seven days off during the year, work 1876 hours. But I have already mentioned the elevator "boy" who complained that he worked twelve, sometimes fourteen hours at a stretch in an airless lift; and of course guides and all the list of people serving tourists look with envy on the seven-hour day; they must take their rest in the winter.

Women "workers" get two months, white collar women six weeks, off before and again after childbirth, with wages going on as usual, not to mention an allowance for the child. Most men in the Soviet Union seem to be agreeable or at least reconciled to having their wives go out to work. The worker's labor union and his factory, in other words the Government, pay for his vacation trip and keep his wages going while he is gone. It is a pleasure to see some one besides presidents and congressmen go on a junket at other people's expense.

My first "rest day" in the USSR, which, I think, happened to be a Monday, was certainly a real one. Not even beds were made, and there were no napkins next day. Boys and girls in identical gym-suits filled the streets; the main thoroughfares were thronged with on the whole well-laundered people. About the only



Lunch Time in a Collective-Farm Crèche.



*Photo © A. K. Dawson*

Young Bolsheviks Out for an Airing.





To the Visitor From Lands of Plenty the Supplies Still Seem Scanty in Sovietland's "Open" Markets.

thing lacking to make it an American Sunday—no, let's say a Saturday afternoon, since there was no sense of "breaking the Sabbath"—was that boisterous hilarity which the masses of the USSR never seem to attain.

On my first "free day" in Moscow we drove out to Tzariskina for a picnic lunch in the woods back of the unfinished palaces of Catherine II, now a public toilet, saw some old churches, mingled with the quiet throngs on the banks of the Moskba River, the most indecisive of rivers, which makes its way in an endless series of S's through the city and the flat country about it. Steamers bring oil all the way from Baku to Moscow by way of the Volga and the Moskba and its tributaries. Excursion steamers ply on the Moskba, crowded like all other forms of transportation, especially on rest days. Bathers splash about in it, most of them in the nude. But there are no hopeful fishermen hopelessly squatting along it, as along the Seine; for no one but the Fish Trust may fish in Sovietland.

Russians revel in the open air, perhaps because their summers are so short and their winters no time to be outdoors. They are fond of trees, grass, wild flowers, the alleged hills about Moscow; they love to bathe and sunbathe naked. Even if he has no *datcha*, which may mean anything from an aged one-room shack to the near-palace of a right-hand man of Stalin, so long as it is in the country, your typical Muscovite still goes to the country every rest day, returning in the evening with his arms full of flowers, plants, branches. His tenement home may be smelly, crowded, indecent, his

food-pot often empty, but there are more likely than not to be pots of flowers in every window.

Many an ex-Grand Duke's estate has been sacrificed to this longing by being made a Culture and Rest Park. "Rest" park, I take it, because there is no room or quiet or privacy in which to rest at home—those crowded, noisy "homes" with their fifteen square meters of floor space per person—and when people talk about culture it usually means they haven't as much of it as they think they should or wish they did have.

Most of the Culture and Rest Parks I saw left a very good impression: often miles of woods, delightful winding walks, rowboats for hire on the Neva or the Moskba or some other river S'ing its way through the city and beyond, or on a toy lake, an artificial pond if necessary, children's playgrounds with nearly all their favorite amusement devices and some which capitalistic inventiveness has not thought of, above all orderliness and respectability and a complete and total absence of that rowdyism we subconsciously expect in any playground of the masses.

Communism seems to include an admission fee to everything. You pay admission to almost all Culture and Rest Parks, more or less, according to your Soviet standing, fifty kopeks to a ruble or two, sometimes as much as five rubles for a choice seat at a symphony concert in surroundings very much like the Dell in Philadelphia's Fairmount Park. The symphony rarely begins before 9:30 or 10, often not until much later. But there are other orchestras, or at least bands, big outdoor movie pavilions showing old silent films, long woodsy walks to fill in your time meanwhile.

Well-dressed people, apparently with plenty of rubles to spend, crowd such places as the Hermitage Park in the heart of Moscow until the small hours, until long after them, for all I know. There is vaudeville every night, which the money-shy can look at over a fence; there are better shows, most of them at least semi-public, a good repertory theater; there are Georgian restaurants, rows of little tables flanked by stools, obsequious—well, at least quite nearly enough so—waiters from the Caucasus; there are stands selling the Russian versions of “pop,” lemonade, ice-cream . . .

Yes, Sovietland’s Culture and Rest Parks have all the Coney Island features, games, petty gambling devices, everything from volley-ball courts to peanut stands, all the trappings and popular amusements for the “people,” as well as first-rate concerts, theaters worth attending, opera, ballet, quiet, rolling hills for the neurotic, boat trips for the water-loving. But all “concessions” are owned by the State, which makes for orderliness and quiet, does away with shouting for business, with dubious tricks to bring custom.

If it is a free day there will be girls and young women, here and there a man, teaching or directing folk-dancing on grassy open spaces, showing the uninitiated masses how to use their leisure time, accordeons and *balalaikas* giving their own private concerts under the trees, fathers and children romping on the grass, just as they would enjoy the holiday under capitalism. You may come upon a bare space free of trees where rather hungry-looking middle-aged men will be doing the high-jump—the winner’s record perhaps a meter—

most of them somehow giving the impression that they would rather be sitting and smoking in the shade. There is much urging to athletic training in the USSR, much parading in shorts and trunks by both sexes. But there are no great number of athletic contests, particularly with foreign countries. They say such childish rivalry is anti-communistic. I wonder if it is really because the wise and adaptable opportunists who are running things in the Soviet Union realize the effect it would have on the mob if their athletes were left far in the rear by those of wicked capitalistic countries.

There are "One Day Rest Parks," where a man can come and lie naked in the sun whenever he has a free day—women too, in a place apart. Lines of little children stroll along under female and more or less adult surveillance, perfectly natural about such commonplace things as the calls of nature. Herding children on the Soviet plan may make them more normal and better mixers, weed out all the tutored mama's boys who find life so difficult when they must finally face the cold, indifferent world. But I should think it would eventually result in a terrible standardization. Of course that is what Russia's present rulers want. But personally, after seeing a cross-section of the USSR, I am more keen than ever for individualism—which, of course, proves me an old fogey, since all the world is moving steadily away from that.

Intourist excursions to factories struck me as mainly time wasted. In Moscow we set out by bus at 10 in theory, 10:45 in reality, passed the sentry at 11:20, waited half an hour for a "worker" who "lectured" to

us until some of us protested about 12:30 that we had come to see rather than to hear, that the ears are much more susceptible to propagandist half-truths than the eyes. But even then the tourists stood gaping at each process in the manufacture of electric-light bulbs as if it were something wonderful and worth coming all the way to Russia to see. Whereas the same thing is better done and just as interesting in scores of factories in the United States, had it occurred to these single-touring Americans to visit them.

Granted that Russia, the whole USSR, has done marvels in improving factories and factory production over what they were in Russia in tzarist days. But that undoubted fact accepted, it is a waste of good travel funds to wander through Russian factory after factory. What we come to the Soviet Union to see are those things in which they are making, or give some promise of making, improvements over our ways, and factories are not yet one of them. But to the Russians themselves, and to the tourist who has not had a tourist's curiosity in his own land, his adopted land in perhaps a majority of cases, their factories are "marvelous." They are like a poor child marveling over a new, to him, toy which rich children have had for generations.

Sovietland may be a paradise compared with politically backward America, as its communist-minded inhabitants claim. But in at least one respect that "paradise" uses America as the yard-stick for its industrial revolution. Technically the United States is the Russians' god, though they hate to admit it. They pretend to despise the United States, but they really

admire it with a fervent admiration. Technically, that is; politically they hold us in very low esteem—"they" being that unrecorded percentage of the 160,000,000 or so who believe deep down in their hearts in the present régime, the advantageousness of Communism over all other known forms of society.

All this hubbub and straining and striving, this ceaseless urging and speeding-up propaganda in the usually vain effort to get Russians to step around as we have, a shot in the arm to produce results liberty and opportunity, for all their faults, have given us. Far be it from me to sing pæans over the perfection of our form of society, to doubt the wisdom of some "planned economy," some nation- or world-wide control of industry and production and wealth. But—well, it struck me as symbolical that the chairs in that factory meeting-place were bound together with wooden frames, so that one could not move his seat an inch unless all did; that the inevitable bust or portrait of Lenin was completely devoid of artistic merit; that the piano was padlocked; that a soldier with a sharp bayonet stands at every factory gate and door . . .

When I came to a factory alone, except of course for the inevitable guide, and unannounced, a worker at the office desk received us as gruffly as his garb was rough, demanded "documents" to prove the guide was a guide. Of course he was bluffed out of it in time, as a suitable degree of audacity and persistence will among all such people as the Russians. But whatever the advantages may be to the workers themselves, there was never any evidence that production itself was

faring any better under workers' orders than under capitalism.

That was in Erivan, away down in Armenia. For I continued to visit a factory now and then in spite of my better judgment. There were three modern bathtubs in that pickle factory, each half full of chopped vegetables and a shovel. There was a bathtub in the courtyard of the hotel—for testing inner tubes. Now if that isn't real sacrifice . . .

Three eight-hour shifts there, the women then on hand working from seven to three, with lunch and rest time from noon to one. But it was all piecework, as is fitting, I suppose, where the main task is cutting vegetables into pieces.

The water-boy at the big buildings under construction for the manufacture of synthetic rubber far out in the dusty outskirts, with a faultless view of snow-capped Ararat, was a woman, with a heavy earthenware jar. Twenty per cent of the workers on this purely construction job were women, seventy per cent of them *udarniki*, whereas the percentage among the whole force was only sixty. Or it may be that the Armenian head engineer was stretching a point in favor of her sex in order to be polite to blond Lydia of Riga, married to an Armenian herself and gracing just then the calling of guide. We had waited an hour for him in his office, by the way, and then found him in the factory restaurant, rather a natural place to search between noon and one, though that didn't seem to occur to Lydia until I mentioned it.

What, I seem to hear some ignoramus on Soviet life asking, is an *udarnik*? Shock-worker is not quite



the word. Hard worker comes nearer it. Any one who does his work well and industriously, in the Russian meaning of those words, and who, my guess is, stands in well with the workers' committees, becomes an *udarnik*. He (or she) gets special favors: advantages in those shops where his worker's card is honored, choice of vacations, of lodgings, his photograph perhaps, sometimes in Lenin size, on the billboards and triumphal arches in Culture and Rest Parks. There are *udarniki* in all lines of Soviet endeavor. Any worker, even behind desk or counter, is eligible to *udarnikdom*: trainmen, street sweepers (who always wear skirts, as far as my investigations carried), office employees, shop attendants who successfully fight sales resistance, in the rare cases when that is necessary or desirable, and who, by the way, get a bonus as well as a salary. It is all quaintly reminiscent of the rewards and encouragements we give small school children for good deportment and scholarship. Well, is it news to you that the Russians, most of the 160,000,000 or so beneath the hammer-and-sickle banner, are children under their adult skins? Besides, don't we pin ribbons and medals on our heroes?

Russia—the USSR as a whole—is the land of briefcases. The man or woman who does not carry one is conspicuous, is probably under suspicion of not trying to do his share of mental as well as physical striving toward the building of the new society. The typical Russian briefcase suggests an important government mission, perhaps orders for an execution by the GPU. But if you see one accidentally opened in a shop you

will probably glimpse inside an extra pair of shoes—gym shoes or sneakers, we would call them—rather far along on the road to disintegration, as if the bearer were never sure those he is wearing will get him home, and then a few pieces of black bread, though the carrier be as important-looking a personage as you can find in the poorly dressed Russia of to-day.

Speaking of important personages, the new American Embassy and Consulate occupies one of the largest and most imposing recent buildings in Moscow, seven stories high, with room not only for Embassy and Consulate offices and the Ambassador's residence, but for baseball practice in the courtyard when the incredibly numerous staff has nothing else to do. To see the swarms of Uncle Sam's minions there you would never in the world suspect that the taxpayer in the United States was ever in the least worried. But I suppose the time will come when they will be strewn hither and yon throughout the Soviet Union. The Soviet authorities could not, so they said, find other accommodations for some of their own government agencies already established in the building when it was assigned to our multifarious representatives, which gives our Moscow headquarters the perhaps false aspect of being under constant surveillance.

Ah, that dreaded GPU! To the tourist the blue-capped, well-uniformed, often handsome young men who frankly belong to it look almost harmless. But I had repeated evidence that the Russians, every last subject, if that is the word, of Stalin feel constant watching, that mutual suspicion is universal—except among simple American and English tourists—though

the people of Sovietland are so used to it, always having had it under the tzar, that they don't realize it is unusual, think it is true of all countries, especially of wicked capitalistic countries.

A bayonet civilization; soldiers on guard with fixed bayonets in every place imaginable; the GPU secretly watching everywhere else. But that terrible Red Army consists on close view of bashful, unsophisticated, rather anemic-looking country boys, in khaki-greenish uniforms of very poor heavy calico tucked into high boots, who look as if they would probably not conquer the world in the next war, at least with a foreign country, any more than their fathers did in the past.

But to come back to our subject. All GPU officers, most policemen, a host of other uniformed gentry carry—no, wear, hanging rather awkwardly from the left shoulder by too much strap—a shorter, almost square . . . shall we say offspring of a mapcase sired by a briefcase? . . . of excellent workmanship and of a material that reminds you of the days when "Russian leather" had a rich sound, just as Russian pigs' bristles meant real toothbrushes, instead of the soggy mop you swab your gums with nowadays. That mapcase-briefcase is what the Russian cop reaches for when he whistles you over to the curb to examine your "document" and fine you for jay-walking. Out of just such a hiding-place, they tell me, come the orders to step downstairs and see if you shouldn't be facing a firing-squad. There is something fascinating about those excellent square briefcases hanging awkwardly from uniformed shoulders by too long a strap.

The Moscow Kremlin is one of the few long-heralded sights in the world that are not disappointing. Policemen or soldiers by the score escort and flank, lead and bring up the rear of the endless groups of tourist visitors, soldiers armed with revolver and whistle and ready to use either on an instant's notice. They watch us hawk-eyed without respite as we make our way along the only street inside the former sanctuary of splendor and ceremonial, now named Communist Street. There still are many valuable jewels within the Kremlin walls—but these trigger-fingering youths ought to see the casual way in which the Tower of London is guarded. Still, perhaps it is some flesh-and-blood valuable that keeps those lynx-eyed young soldiers constantly swirling about us during the Kremlin visit.

They are restoring, cleaning, preserving the splendid paintings inside the Kremlin, caring for crown jewels and tzarist coaches of state with all the respect for the artistic and the truly historical that any form of society could show. Churches have been razed and turned to other uses in the USSR; art treasures have been exiled, sold down the river in the mad struggle for *valuta*. But if the best has not been kept at home there must have been wonderful things in Russia indeed when the revolution came, and I saw no evidence anywhere within the Soviet Union that anything of real artistic merit has been destroyed or misused, not even the marvelous mosaics in old cathedrals that have become anti-religious museums.

The impractical Russian temperament is symbolized by that two-ton bell squatting on the ground within the

Kremlin, the largest bell in the world, so large that no bell tower in the world could hold it, so cracked that a boy in his teens could crawl inside it; and by the great cannon nearby, that could never have been fired without bursting, as impractical as the marble boat in the Summer Palace at Peiping. The practical temperament of the present rulers of Russia is symbolized by the fact that the tourist may not photograph bell or cannon—but Intourist men trail along and try to sell us, at fabulous prices, pictures of ourselves with the bell or the cannon as background.

The photography rules in the Soviet Union are puzzling to any one and burdensome to those of us who like to give concrete illustrations of our impressions and comments. You must not photograph a bridge, a railway train, a street-car, a soldier or soldiers, or anything military or pertaining to aviation. You may take photographs from trains, but NOT at stations! You must not photograph any queue, particularly a bread-line, or anything that will give the outside world visual proof that your written observations on the low standard of living and kindred sore points with the Soviet authorities are true. If that were all, it would not be so bad. But the rules are as enigmatic as in Japan, seem as silly to the casual observer, and apparently are unknown in toto to any one in the length and breadth of the USSR.

But let us not judge too hastily; perhaps there are reasons you and I wot not of in the Soviet ban on photography. Competition, for instance; no reason why picture postcards should not be as much a State monopoly as the making of tractors. The queerest part is that

there are so many things you must not photograph, when you must have your films developed and censored inside the Soviet Union before you take them over the border. Undeveloped, or for that matter unexposed, films will be ruthlessly unrolled in daylight by nose-y young soldiers at the frontier, amid much protestive shrieking from lady tourists. But the censorship of films, or even the outrageous cost in "gold" rubles of developing for amateurs there, is not serious compared with the atrocious developing in chemicals long since in their dotage.

The House of the Boyar in Moscow is well worth seeing; equally so the secret printing-shop whence issued the more or less constant stream of revolutionary literature that gave the tzar's secret police the jitters and eventually did more than that for the tzar himself. It is no place for fat or unwieldy tourists to visit. Far outside the center of Moscow an Armenian kept the Caucasian Fruit Store. The front is still the same, though the fruit displayed there now seemed to be manufactured. There is a cellar stairs to a cellar, a trapdoor in that which no doubt was covered with innocent-looking wares. Lifted, it discloses a steep ladder into a hole. Down there you crawl on knees and elbows through a kind of wooden sluiceway into a sound-proof, cool little room carved out of the living rock. The printing-press, the fonts of queer Russian type, are still there. You can find its replica in the memories of the village printing-shop of your boyhood.

Lenin wrote in secret ink between the lines of books brought to him to "read" in prison. Once, a favorite guide story has it, he complained to a visitor that he

had already swallowed three supplies of secret ink that day and had no especial appetite for supper. Stupid, like all strutting people, the tzarists must have been to let him get away with it. But it all goes to show that it takes a mixture of many qualities, and great persistence, to overthrow a régime, even if it has long since outlived its time.

At last and only just in time I saw Lenin—ten years after he died of what was politely called cancer of the brain. When I reached Moscow he was “under reparations,” and his tomb closed to visitors. Two soldiers with naked bayonets of sinister length and needle-like proportions stand like statues, three hours at a time, I heard, day and night at the entrance to the handsome porphyry or red granite tomb on Red Square. Yes, handsome, if somewhat somber. The striking simplicity, at least of lines, of that dull-red mausoleum with gray granite lines for contrast does not clash as you expected with the ornateness of the medieval Kremlin behind it. It is a good piece of work, if you must have such things at all. Bill Haywood, John Reed, Ruthenburg, Hibben, and other American Communists have their last resting-place along the Kremlin wall behind it, which I suppose is a slap at us as well as an honor to them.

The queue was four abreast and several times as long as the broad Red Square where the Muscovites of old held off Tartar invaders and on which it S’ed itself for standing-space while it crawled forward like an unusually sluggish snake. But foreigners have only to go up to the head of the line and prove their status

with a mispronounced word or two in order to step inside without lining up. Under capitalism in our own good land the foreigner takes his turn with the rest of us. But Russia is only one of many distant countries where the foreigner has special privileges without so much as a frown of protest from the inhabitants.

Old foreign residents of Moscow are still debating whether it is ЛЕНИН himself or his wax replica who lies in khaki uniform, his hands and placid head with its thin fringe of hair exposed, within that great glass case, so I shall not attempt an opinion. He looks shiny, but believers will tell you this is due to the paraffin injected to keep him life-like. There can be no disagreement, however, about the argus-eyed attendants who somehow keep every visitor under constant surveillance from entrance to exit, like those portraits whose eyes follow you wherever you move before them. It takes days, they tell me, every now and then to "give him a bath" and make the other preparations for his public appearance; and the story still survives that his successors almost refused to pay the high price of embalming for keeps. Whatever the cost, it was worth it, in a land where priests and monks had trained the masses for centuries in the belief that preservation of "saints" in glass cases was a proof of their holiness. You have only to watch the awed and fearsome faces of the peasants and villagers who make their way through that gruesome crypt to realize that.

Lenin and Stalin would surely not be so famous, at least abroad, under their real names as they are under their aliases. Nikolai Vladimir Ulyanoff—Lenin is so much easier to remember and to pronounce and to



spell; and is there any other case in history of a secret pen-name or a criminal pseudonym surviving after the real name is almost forgotten?

The guide who piloted us through the Kremlin swore she did not know where Stalin lives within—or outside—those aged gray walls. She nearly cried when we doubted her word; said she would certainly tell us if she knew. So the chivalrous thing to do, even in a land where chivalry is a bourgeois weakness, is to give her the benefit of the doubt.

Besides, it is quite possible that she was telling the truth. Stalin and the other high government officials move so fast that they somewhat resemble, at least in that, bandits with a score of hide-outs. Stalin himself is almost inaccessible, does not receive even ambassadors, rarely comes in contact with a foreigner, is said to have half a dozen doubles, is commonly referred to in the USSR as "the man you never see." Did I call Stalin a government official? Queer how loose-fingered one can become with words, speaking of "Russia" when one means the Soviet Union, saying "Communist" in describing the sort of political society they have there, calling "Stalin" the Russian dictator.

Joseph Djugashvili, the "man of steel," is not a dictator; he is only a secretary, General Secretary of the Communist Party and not actually even an official of the Soviet Union. In the list of rulers of the USSR in such publications as the "World Almanac" you will not find his name, or even his alias, mentioned. He is about as much a government official as William Green is in the U.S.A., if you must have a parallel. That is,

he has no power, but he wields a great deal more power than many "important" government officials.

You will hear it whispered inside the continent he rules, and shouted outside it, that Stalin is a former bandit, train robber, murderer by his own hand, that he killed his wife after a party one evening and had her cremated before lunch next day and no questions asked—in face of the fact that she was given a State funeral, in which Stalin himself walked at the head of the mourners, and that she was buried, not cremated—that the widow of Lenin shot at him, that Lenin warned his followers not to let Stalin get to power. Others, and not necessarily his political compadres, will tell you he is a fine fellow. I have no personal testimony to offer on either side. I merely report what was told me, with much corroborative illustration, and the fact that all Georgians are reputed to be "bad actors."

My own guess is that Stalin is neither the criminal nor the fine fellow the opposing camps make him out, that he is rather halfway between and much more the ordinary man than we like to picture all "great" men. I doubt whether there is anything of the fanatic about Stalin, as there is about many of his followers. My own picture of him is of a persistent, hard-headed, calculating person whose faculties coördinate, who doesn't need even a mane of hair to make him the undisputed ruler of 160,000,000 or more people of many races.

As a young man Stalin looks thin and intellectual—unless they had some one else pose for those youthful pictures of him to be found in Museums of the Revolution—and anything but a tough customer and a hard egg, as is reputed of him even as a boy in Tiflis. To-

day his face suggests that power and prosperity have changed him for the worse, as they do so many people.

A friend of mine saw him at Sochi, the most aristocratic of Black Sea playgrounds—unless again it was one of his understudies—looking fatter and older and a little more gross than in his most recent pictures and very far from the ethereal young idealist of his early portraits, though Lenin stays the same fresh, rosy, if bald-headed, boy of fifty-five he was when he died ten years ago.

## CHAPTER VI

### LIFE'S COMMONPLACES

*What They—and We—Eat . . . No Tips, Please! . . .  
How They Dress! . . . And Those Haircuts!*

THE Russians are as disorderly about meal hours as about everything else. Always late, they keep almost transatlantic time when it comes to meals. Their breakfast runs until noon, the average Russian gets around to lunch (they call it dinner) some time between three and six, and supper is from eight to eleven—farther south from nine or ten and dragging on over midnight to daylight, more or less.

It is not a bad scheme either, especially for sight-seers. I commend the idea to most countries that consider tourists one of their chief crops, above all to the British-Irish Tourist Association, with a hint about the incompatibility of sight-seeing and adamant meal hours. Though it makes for late sleeping in the morning, which to a man of my up-bringing savors of Sodom and Gomorrah, I really like the Russian scheme of things culinary, as far as hours go—the whole day's work (or play) done and over before late-afternoon dinner and nothing left to worry about, a chance to spend all the rest of the day and the whole evening at your own devices.

Food, as far as Intourist "guests" are concerned, is

plentiful and sometimes almost good—the soups, for instance. I can still recall in detail my first breakfast in Leningrad. There was a glass of tea, bodyguarded by a few huge irregular lumps of whitish sugar, a good-sized pat of butter, several kinds of bread, including the terrible “black” bread against which so many bourgeois writers on the USSR fulminate—personally I never saw it darker than a chocolate-brown, and unless your tastes are perverted it is far better than our anemic denaturized white bread; in fact, one of the hardships of the thousands of Russian exiles in other lands is their craving for some good old Russian “black” bread again—two boiled eggs (the bad one was willingly—well, at least eventually, replaced) and a carafe of boiled water. As I may have said before, one of the few class distinctions between the “categories” of tourists is that there is no compote for “specials” if they have eggs, and vice versa. An egg, by the way, is never fresh in Russia, perhaps because the hens are so het up over the Five Year Plan that they are laying their eggs already partly hatched.

Soviet waiters may not know anything else (though embryo detective-story writers among the tourists would have it that they are all great linguists under their Russian-only pretense and are always listening in on us, to our eventual misfortune), but they do know the word “meal ticket.” It is *talon*, or “heel,” in Russian, in case you wish to confound them with your incredible linguistic ability; and if you lose your meal ticket it will go just as hard with you as it would under capitalism.

“*Café* or *chai*?” is the invariable second question as

you sit down and unfold a huge snow-white napkin that seems to be of heavy linen and is newly laundered at every meal. Has the textile industry outwitted the heavier ones or are those napkins left over from the tzarist régime? The texture and other circumstantial evidence would point to the second alternative.

"Can I have *moloko*?" you may ask.

"Da, da"—which, as you know, has nothing to do with paternity, but signifies an affirmative—"hot or cold?"

The first few times I shivered; later I added the word *holodno* to my international vocabulary. But for some reason I never acquired the one for "hot," so that as long as I remained in the USSR I had either to wipe fictitious sweat from my lofty brow or dip my fingers in imaginary hot milk—or water, if it was a chambermaid instead of a waiter—and shake them in a semblance of pain. In some places careful waiters, and especially waitresses, will tell you that "specials" can't have both milk and dessert. I was always able to argue it out, however, that milk takes the place of tea, not of food.

*Moloko* is usually poor and always boiled, and nothing, not even assault and battery, will induce a Russian waiter to bring you your tea or its equivalent until after your food has been consumed. To get plain cold water and no sugar in your tea are great feats, even if you have a Russian-born fellow-tourist as interpreter. You are not always sure the water is boiled, but you know the ice you may be able to get with it isn't, if only from its sickly color. I got real ice water once in the USSR, thanks perhaps to the ex-American boiler-maker who

was assistant Intourist manager in that town. If so, his influence didn't last until supper time. *Pivo*, Russia's beer, is poor and too sweet, like almost all Russian wines. The mineral water you buy is served cold, but all of it I came in contact with is not only what my children call "prickly" water, very prickly indeed, but is physicking—as if the food and the heat were not enough so—and it costs tourists about fifteen times what it does those who pay their debts in rubles.

For luncheon, by which I mean dinner, "specials" get a good big soup, usually a *borsh*, which is a whole cabbage boiled-dinner in itself, with a knife furnished to cut the meat in it, followed by three or four choices in the meat course. That first afternoon meal in Leningrad consisted of ham and mashed, after the soup, white, brown, "black," and cabbage- or meat-filled bread or rolls, tea, coffee, or milk, and strawberries. There is no butter, except at breakfast, and never any caviar for "specials"—unless they kick a lot or tip a little *valuta*. But the strawberries were good and there was powdered sugar to improve them. Rice and a big piece of all-white but still hardy chicken may be your lot; usually there is a huge tomato-and-cucumber salad, especially in the south, and almost invariably your dessert is a choice between *morodzna* (which means ice-cream, more or less) and *compote*. In the tourist phrasebook compote is translated "stewed fruit," but that isn't quite the word. Canned fruit would be nearer, and still not exact. But if you have ever been in continental Europe the word of course registers instantly without a translation.

The orchestra drifts in about 3:30 and opens with

the "Merry Widow" or something equally ancient and worldwide. Don't expect to miss it by coming early, because if you sit down to your luncheon at three, which is the very best you can do, you will get your soup about 3:30, the next course at four—*shashleek*, perhaps; in any case meat that should have tarried longer on its way from the slaughter-house—and finally your strawberry or vanilla ice, with a biscuit-cookie standing erect in it like a frozen polar explorer caught in an avalanche, at about 4:30. It is not always easy to sit and smile contentedly until that hour after a breakfast of bread and jam and tea early in the morning. But of course it will be your own foolish fault if you get up early while under Intourist care. You won't even find Intourist itself up until around ten. There is no soup on the supper menu, so if you sit down to that at nine the chances are that you will get your first food about 9:35 and your dessert hardly an hour later.

Yes, tourist food is plentiful and not so bad as it might be. But the sameness of food is a bit distressing, food evidently cooked in bulk and—well, if you liked army rations, the come-an'-get-it grub of the rolling kitchen, you'll like what you get to eat under Communism. But that high-school lunchroom from which I used to flee, contrary to rules, to a cafeteria down on the main street is still too vivid a memory with me to be intrigued by food suggestive of a "kitchen factory."

The waiter takes his time, but he is not so bad after he gets started, especially for a man who rarely gets a tip. Besides, there is circumstantial evidence of just as



much confusion and lack of order and precedent in the kitchen as in the front office. "Сичас! —SEYCHAS!" used for "Right now!" and the most common word in Russia, at least in tourist circles, really means literally, linguistically, and in practice, "within the hour," and is the Russian's closest equivalent of haste. So don't take it too seriously when the waiter throws it over his shoulder at you.

Intourist hotel waiters wear rather soiled white suits, soft white shirts, and a black bow tie. Personally, I should prefer to see them in smocks—and guides should wear those embroidered old-Russian costumes that are now for sale to tourists. I never saw one of the shirtless waiters at least one writer resented, though that garb would have been justified in many places. There is little noise in the service. The larger hotels have an older man, trained under the old régime, or a foreigner as head-waiter or restaurant manager, in ordinary civilian clothes, to keep the waiters stepping instead of gossiping. You call your waiter "Tovarish" of course, and you might even try "Tovarish Udarnik" if you really want action or to make a hit or get a goat—and you don't need to learn any feminine equivalent.

A dime, or its synonym in any foreign money, will make a waiter your slave for the duration of your stay, though he will sniff at paper rubles. He works long hours, usually gets no tips, and must pocket secretly any he does get. The waiter at — in the Crimea, for instance, who was on duty from 9 A.M. to 3 the next morning, got eighty rubles a month and "food not fit for a dog" and almost no tips. He had a wife and

two children, "so, you see, she can't work"—mentally, I mean, he still belonged to the old régime. "We are trying to make waiters and such people realize that they are not mere sycophants," your guide will tell you—which is all to the good, unless meanwhile, like the horse taught to live on an oat a day, they starve.

No, tips are degrading, from the Communist point of view. Moreover, the average visitor to Sovietland has read or heard somewhere that it is unlawful either to offer or to receive them. Yet Russians complain that most American tourists give no tips! They want us to believe their tales, but not take them so seriously as to act upon them.

An American cigarette will put a smile on the highest official face—and no wonder. For not only is there a great shortage of cigarettes, but all the good tobacco grown in the USSR is exported, sacrificed to the craving for *valuta*. Many smokers use pieces of newspapers as cigarette papers. A man who rolled such a one on a train from pipe tobacco I gave him licked his chops for half an hour over it and passed it around as a special treat to all his immediate fellow-passengers of both sexes, for a puff each. American canned goods are very welcome tips, cheap fountain-pens will delight your untipable guide, and silk stockings— Oh, come now, you know from the title of one book on Russia that those will bring almost anything in the way of "service."

Russians do come into Intourist hotels and eat, but they are people as well-dressed as we are and seem to pay with a "document." At least one I saw left a five- or ten-ruble tip on a clean plate, over which the waiter

hastily set another plate, no doubt rescuing it on the way to the kitchen. There are fair dinners in some of the rare train diners, with Narzan (Russia's most popular mineral water) or beer thrown in, on an Intourist meal ticket, evidently because the cashier can't accept rubles from tourists. Breakfast on the Black Sea boat consisted of two hard-boiled eggs, a bun, plenty of butter, and tea—with sugar in it if you don't watch out—or coffee, the best coffee, said those who drink the stuff, in Russia. The other steamer meals were rather painfully like those on shore.

Few Russians are overweight and not very many are noticeably underweight. Report has it that middle-sized towns suffer most in the matter of food, especially Jewish ex-merchants, old or sick people, and those "not in good standing." Peasant villages grow their own food and manage to hang on to some of it; Moscow gets special favors. The GPU and other government institutions, down to individual factories, have monopolistic arrangements with collective or State farms. But the former well-to-do in the towns are still hard-up for food, even though the authorities promise to abolish bread-cards with the new year. Many still starve, or at least eventually die of malnutrition. But those who suffer are merely "martyrs of the Revolution." "We are building for the future," is the Soviet answer to any reference to this fact; "life and individual suffering are not very important against that larger goal, and you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs." How tired I got of hearing that last remark! They used it in Germany to poohpooh Hitler atrocities,

always trotted it out in the USSR to justify the other harsh brand of rule.

There is more than one brilliantly lighted РЕСТОРАН, which is Russian for restaurant, floating in the Moskba River. But even in Moscow you must have a government permit to get served in most restaurants outside the center of the city, and in some inside the disappearing Chinese Wall. The capital itself has very few unrestricted eating-places, all with sky-high prices—if you earn your rubles.

Fresh-killed meat is the chief bane of Russian food, as far as the tourist is concerned; for there is almost no cold storage. In Torgsin stores there are reputedly two grades of meat. You point (or smell) and say, "I want a kilo of that." The comrade behind the counter chops off a piece at random, and it will be just your luck whether it is tenderloin or chuck steak. Even in Moscow Torgsins there are no modern refrigerators and such ice as exists is soft and poor and insufficient, and flies usually feast long and lustily on your meat before you do. If it is chicken you want, the comrade chops a piece off the next fowl to make up the kilo or whatever weight you asked for, and if you have been friendly with him that piece may be the breast; if not, the lower legs or the neck. Some American housewives experienced in Russian living make friends so effectually with some Torgsin comrade that he will give them just the cut of meat they point out, so that tenderloin costs no more than a strip of ribs.

When I wore no necktie in Leningrad I was almost conspicuous, would have been embarrassed if I had

not long been used to the open-neck stare at home. The women, too, were rather better dressed than I had expected, but the best-dressed people I saw in the USSR, of either sex, would have looked dowdy at a State Fair in Iowa. Perhaps I can make the general sartorial aspect more visual by saying that the entire country looks as if the people all made their clothes at home from store materials of poor quality and less variety.

The hat is almost unknown on either sex, except on the head of some conservative or contrary tourist. The cap, crumpled in his hand as he spoke, and workman clothes unacquainted with the pressing-board, were—shall we say a pose?—with Lenin. Or is the swing to the cap and worker's clothes a reaction to tzarist magnificence, plus what seems to be a natural tendency of the Russians to be sloppy?

I saw perhaps half a dozen weather-blackened straw hats of the hard type in all my Soviet travels, always on the head of some remnant of the old régime somewhere near the market-beggar in the present social scale. But in Rostov-on-Don they have evolved a brown straw *cap*, rather fancy and of course in military fashion, which is the Soviet way of showing class over mere workmen's caps, now that hats and neckties are rather looked down upon as putting on swank rather out of keeping with the dictatorship of the proletariat.

White or at least light colors greatly predominate in a Russian crowd, at any rate on "free" days and in the principal streets, because the vast majority of men wear no coats and many of them wear white smocks, usually embroidered, belted in at the waist with a very

narrow strap, and almost reaching the knees. Full-bosomed women and bareheaded men with convict haircuts punctuate such a crowd. But many men and boys wear embroidered Tartar skull-caps, preferably with a tassel, that look as if they had been cut from Bokhara rugs.

Well, whatever else she may be accomplishing, Russia is bringing in rational summer dress for men. And I don't for once agree with Will Rogers at all—here's where he and I part company, regretfully and sorrowfully, at least on my part, but firmly and decidedly—when he says, and in capital letters at that, "ANY NATION THAT DON'T KNOW ENOUGH TO STICK THEIR SHIRT-TAIL IN WILL NEVER GET ANYWHERE." Nor do I for a moment believe that Will thinks that. Just a case of a comedian's sense of humor running away with his faithfulness to facts. For Will has been around quite some, too often up in the air perhaps, but still he's covered a lot of ground since he left Claremore and—well, he must have noticed, for instance, that the Chinese don't tuck their shirts in, and they certainly have got somewhere in a lot of lines, take the last fifty or a hundred centuries. No, on the contrary, I'd rather like to see smocks for summer come to the United States. Though, contrarily, I saw red whenever I bumped into a parlor pink affecting this Russian form of undress.

But of course we can't do anything as radical as that to reduce male summer suffering, as long as tailor-shops and clothing-, hat-, necktie-, and shoe-stores are private enterprises. Another nice thing about the USSR is that no top hats are required in calling on

officials. Diplomats and their understudies from wicked capitalistic countries of course still cling to them; it's part of their defense against being mixed in with ordinary people, and found wanting. But while I might hesitate to stand out in the center of Moscow's Red Square and shout the Russian version of "A bas, Stalin!" I should expect to escape unscarred if I called on him in an open-neck shirt and without a coat.

Yet there are coat and hat checkrooms at the bottoms of office stairs, even—or especially, perhaps—in government buildings, and obsequious men to tend them. For Communism has not cured the Russian of the notion that it is little short of an insult to call on a man in outdoor clothing.

More permanent residents tell me that the people have a much better appearance in summer than in winter. In fact, I should have guessed as much. And poor clothing evidently invokes an inferiority complex even among Communists. "We Russians can dress as well as Americans," said a workman in some factory I visited; "better, in fact, because we have better taste—if we have the money to buy the clothes"—and the clothes to buy, he might have added. They are envious of our tourist splendor, close to the bread-line as it would look at home. In the station barber shop at Kiev all the barbers came to feel and exclaim over the twenty-dollar suit, three years old, which was my Sunday best in the USSR. But most of all they envy us our shoes. Heavy Industry is slowly and reluctantly yielding some rights to "consumption goods," but they are still far from supplying the demand in footwear. If your face is not sufficient to tell whether you are a

Russian or not, they invariably look down at your shoes. If you reply to a polite question with "*Nye ponimayu*," the questioner throws a glance at your shoes to see if you are spoofing him.

The American cartoonist's Communist—long-haired, wild-eyed, and bewhiskered—is as far from the facts as his Chinese with a queue. There are almost no beards left in the Soviet Union, and in lieu of buying a straw hat where straw hats are not for sale most men have their heads completely shaved, especially in June. The custom makes them as unsightly as a molting bird, a scraped pig, but I suppose it keeps them from getting hot-headed.

Those convict haircuts are a godsend to victims of the bald-by-nature edict. Communism, by the way, seems to be doing nothing about baldness, has not even taken up the study of grafting on the tops of heads the resplendent beards that are now going to waste. Old-timers say there are fewer shaven heads each year now. Those men who do not have their heads completely shorn are all shaved squarely across the neck, like "roughnecks" everywhere. Why does that class always insist on having its neck shaved? Is it out of self-conscious resentment against what they mistake for a term of opprobrium?



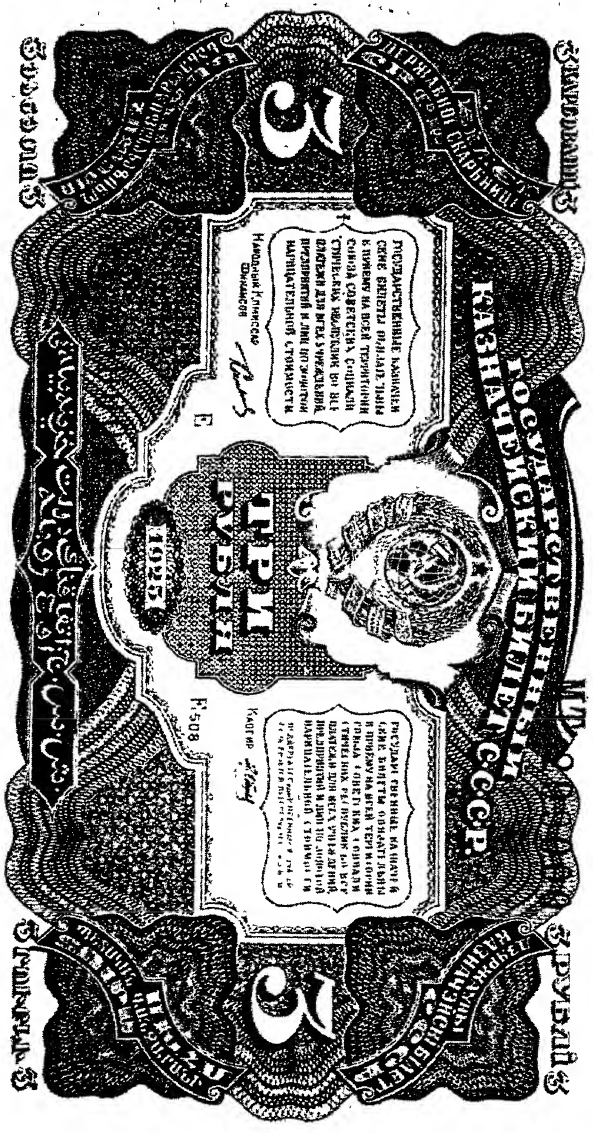
## CHAPTER VII

### SPEAKING OF PAPER

*What is a Ruble, Anyway? . . . Prices are Variegated  
...How's Your Sales Resistance? ... Another  
Kind of Paper . . . What's the News?*

THE simple tourist will come back from his Soviet vacation still wondering whether a ruble is almost a dollar or a little more than nothing. A rousing debate could be held on the subject; and both sides would be right.

If you buy a picture postcard and put a 10-kopek stamp on it in an Intourist hotel, that bit of correspondence will cost you about seventeen cents. If you walk over to the Grand Hotel in Moscow (a "ruble hotel"), for instance, the same card and stamp will cost you about 2½ cents. The day I reached Leningrad I sent a letter to Moscow announcing the purchase and successful entry of that cabelforth calomine lotion. The stamp cost twenty "gold" kopeks, and as the girl at the newspaper desk had no other small change, all I got back from two dimes was a Canadian cent. And the letter got to Moscow the day after I did, leaving more than forty-eight hours later, though that has nothing to do with what I started to say. Neither has the fact that it costs less to send a letter from Russia to America than from Leningrad to Moscow—only



The Russian Ruble Is the Only Currency in the World That Is Printed in Six Languages.



fifteen kopeks, and vastly less if you buy your stamps at a post office. Those fancy stamps for tourists, however, cannot be bought in a post office, in case you are a philatelist, for that would tangle up Soviet book-keeping. A tourist friend wrote me from the Savoy in Moscow to the New Moscow, and the letter reached me two days later. It takes about twenty minutes to walk the same distance. Letters from home seemed to sojourn an inexcusable time somewhere along the way, though they all eventually caught up with me, some of them long after I got home, and only one of them showed any visible evidence of having been "opened by censor."

In other words, during your first days there you will come to the conclusion that life is both slow and expensive in the Soviet Union. But, there again, it is and it isn't. You can't get anything like a clear picture of Soviet life to-day until you have some notion of the paradoxical money situation there.

The *Moscow Daily News* (which does not appear on "rest days" and the third word of whose name is even more grossly misleading) solemnly carries in the upper left-hand corner of the front page the statement:

Ruble to-day:		
\$1 .....	1.13	(sometimes 1.12)
£1 .....	5.75	
100 marks .....	43.87	
100 francs .....	7.50	

and so on. If you are one of those innocent tourists who take this information at its face value and go into a bank and change a ten-dollar bill or cash a traveler's

check for that amount you will get 11.20 or 11.30 rubles. They are "gold" rubles, because it says so on the usually ragged paper ruble itself. Before Roosevelt II the "gold" ruble was worth 52 or 53 cents. I can't tell you whether the fact that our dollar has depreciated and the ruble hasn't proves anything about NRAism versus Communism. All I am sure of is that the money question is the most fantastic of many fantastic things in the paradoxical USSR.

Only the complete simpleton or a tenderfoot in Sovietland ever buys rubles at a bank—he can get dollars in full for his travelers' checks now, by the way, and then go out and buy his rubles on the street—and the man with rubles to sell can't go into a bank and buy dollars, which puts an enormous, a wicked temptation even upon good Communists. For of course the "gold" ruble is entirely a figment of the Kremlin's imagination; it is non-existent. It is really just a façade, a pretense that the ruble is worth its weight in gold. This is not fiat money, it is magician's money, stage money. Four gum-drops for a ruble shows its true worth more exactly than does any rate quoted on the front page of a government-sponsored newspaper.

The railway ticket Intourist gave me for the longest train-ride I had in the USSR—thirty-six hours from Moscow to Rostov-on-Don—cost almost that many rubles. Guides paid our station porters a ruble each, in cash, our taxi-drivers were rewarded in proportion. Intourist runs its own hotels, so I have no means of knowing how much it pays itself for our accommodations. But if it is anywhere near the same ratio, how

on earth can it afford it, when we "specials" are paying only five dollars a day?

At the entrance to Soviet museums, galleries, Culture and Rest Parks and the like, is a sign announcing the entrance fees:

School children .....	.50
Union members .....	.75
Half-members .....	1.00
Ordinary people .....	1.50
TOURISTS .....	2.00

That looks fair enough, when you see your guide pull out two ragged paper rubles and pay your admission. After all, many countries take a mild advantage of the stranger within their gates. But if you go on a special visit to one of these places, or on any real excursion, any sightseeing trip beyond that dawdling two and a half hours a day to which your Intourist contract entitles you, it will be charged in "gold" rubles on your hotel bill, and then that TOURIST entrance fee will be \$1.74, plus whatever the cashier holds out on you because he is "out of change"—and cashiers handling *valuta* always are out of change.

"I hear the American Embassy is going to pay chauffeurs two hundred dollars a month," ran the word in certain circles soon after our recognition of the Soviet Union. Even American diplomats abroad are not quite so open-handed as that, but no wonder such fantasies are taken seriously after the way tourists are swindled and made to like it.

In an Intourist restaurant a bottle of beer costs thirty "gold" kopeks—thirty cents to you. Around the corner you can buy the same beer for a ruble. In the

"open" market of Rostov-on-Don two pears cost 1.20, two small apples or one hundred grams of raisins, a ruble. A little loaf of white bread in—Kharkov, I think it was; at any rate in the only place where I saw white bread for sale in the USSR—cost 1.60. Workers with cards get three and a half kilograms of "black" bread for a ruble, a pound of meat for 2.12. But those are the specially privileged. A shine on the street costs from fifty kopeks to a ruble, depending on who or how generous you are. The average street-car ride costs fifteen or twenty kopeks. I saw a very poor cap in a shop window priced at twenty-four rubles, and all clothing in proportion. Cables—ah, now; well, a 25-word night letter from anywhere in the Soviet Union to New York costs 4.75 rubles, which is a lot of money—or very little, according...

For in the Soviet Union there exists what is colloquially known as the "Black Bourse." To tenderfeet just arriving, the quotation in Leningrad was twenty-five for a dollar. In Moscow, although its foreign residents were bemoaning the fact that the rate had dropped "because there are so many tourists now," it was thirty-five—which was also the quotation in Warsaw that summer. In Tiflis and Batum ragged men slinking along the streets and whispering like prostitutes in a strict town offered fifty. By the time we got to Yalta the rate had slipped back to forty-five, on the excuse that "so many people want rubles." Finally, in Kiev, they were being offered at 42 or 43.

One foreign resident told me that the best rate he had ever got was 87. But out in Siberia, where wages are high and dollars scarce, there are people willing

to pay a hundred rubles for a dollar. Men travel back and forth on the trains between there and Moscow—the “hard” fare is only forty or fifty rubles—and make something approaching a fortune. In fact, those who travel to and fro only between Tiflis and the Red capital make a good living out of the difference in rate in the two cities—for after all, a thirty per cent spread is not a bad break for any speculator. It might be worth the profit on 100,000 rubles or so to most of us to spend six or eight days on trains from Moscow to Tiflis and back, to say nothing of commuting from Siberia. But hardship means nothing to the Russians—and do please remember that whenever I say “Russian” I probably mean any one of the many kinds of people—the latest figures I heard credit the Soviet Union with 182 different races or dialects—who live under the shadow of the sickle-and-hammer banner. My information, which seems reasonable, is that Armenians are most frequently the go-betweens in this business.

There are several reasons why natives of the USSR want *valuta*, which means any kind of foreign money, even though they cannot cross the frontiers. They may be trying to lay up enough to buy their way out of the country; they may need *valuta* to pay for a visa at a foreign consulate; they may be mere speculators. But the majority probably have designs on something in a Torgsin store. That man in Batum who begged us to accept forty rubles for a dollar and finally produced forty-five, swearing almost tearfully that it was all he had, stepped at once, when my companion compassionately gave him a dollar for them, into a Torgsin



store to buy whatever he had been coveting in vain in rubles.

Let's say, for instance, that only the uppers of your last pair of shoes are left. You have tried for weeks, perhaps for months, in the "closed" shop where your "worker's" card is honored, in Mostorg and all the other shops that accept rubles, to find a pair of shoes that will fit you. The Mostorg price is 250 or 300, anyway, even if they did fit. For weeks you may have seen in a Torgsin window just the shoes you want. They are priced at five or six "gold" rubles. So if you can catch some foreigner willing to trade you a five-dollar bill for your 250 rubles—though that may be much more than your monthly wages—you get reshod and you are no worse off financially than if you had waited another six months or a year until your size of shoe reached Mostorg.

It makes an instant and immediate difference in your sales resistance whether the ruble is worth 87 to 90 cents or only two or three cents. In an "open" market somewhere in Sovietland I saw a good second-hand German bicycle offered at a hundred and ten rubles, a poorer one of Russian make at seventy, and in Torgsin around the corner an excellent new English one was for sale at forty-five "gold" rubles. Let's see, just where are we? That's the trouble when you begin to try to evaluate the ruble; there just isn't any answer. Take, for instance, laundry for tourists: to get a soft shirt washed and ironed through Intourist costs thirty-two cents. So unless your linen is unusually good for these times it will be better to throw such things away and

buy new. But there, I am forgetting; where would you buy them? So you have two choices left, of which the least troublesome and disgraceful is to carry your soiled linen home to be washed.

At the best motion picture show in Rostov-on-Don—or anywhere else in the USSR that summer—the film story of the Chelyuskin disaster, billed as a “40% premium” picture (with vaudeville as silly as ours thrown in, by the way), the best seats cost exactly a nickel, and ice-cream cones without the cone were one cent each in the lobby . . . if you had been so bold and reprehensible as to buy bootleg rubles. With such rubles five delicious big red apples would have cost you 1½ cents in a Black Sea port. At Yalta some of us tourists paid five paper rubles to see an excellent ballet by performers from Moscow, while those of us who got our tickets through Intourist at the hotel paid a dollar or so for seats farther back. I saw an American tourist who already had his Intourist ticket for the trip pay \$25.41 for a cabin to himself during a three-day voyage on the Black Sea, instead of the fifty-seven cents it would have cost him in paper rubles at the ticket office on the wharf. In fact, he tried to pay in rubles the price printed in the official railway-and-steamship folder. But he tried in the wrong place. The Intourist manager merely said, “You know I can’t take rubles from a tourist.”

The Russian Jews from America seem to be well supplied with rubles by their relatives inside the Union soon after they get there. To clamp down on them would, I suppose, counteract Intourist’s ardent drive for tourists. The other half of the travelers carrying

American passports are well-meaning, law-abiding people who feel they are being deceived and unjustly discriminated against in this ruble matter. It would be a kindness, and an inexpensive one, if Intourist would give every tourist a hundred rubles for his small needs, along with the free visa that goes with five days or more of Soviet travel and accommodation—but that would not only let its “guests” take a street-car now and then instead of hiring an Intourist Lincoln, but it would be equivalent to admitting that one hundred rubles is NOT \$87.66 or so.

No foreigner living in the Soviet Union will openly admit buying bootleg rubles. But it's hard to explain on any other grounds the apparent affluence of most of them. In fact, I was assured that “every foreigner living in Russia patronizes the ‘Black Bourse.’”

“Oh, come, you don't mean foreign diplomats and accredited newspaper correspondents and . . . ?”

“I said ‘everybody,’ and I could tell you a juicy tale of a certain embassy that borrowed rubles from a Soviet bank to get itself established and when asked to repay them at the ‘gold’ rate just sent a young secretary on an official mission to Warsaw and back. Some of the smaller legations carry on a flourishing business in bootleg rubles.”

Sovietland is the only country I have ever run across which immeasurably prefers foreign money to its own—and the only one that prints its money in six languages. In Poland, during the first years after the war, the dollar was more popular than the newly born and awkwardly christened *zloty*, but since our brain-trusters have been nibbling at it this flattering condi-

tion has changed—except in Sovietland. There, when the United States “went off gold,” the dollar dropped from 1.94 rubles to 1.13, or 1.12. BUT bootleg rubles rose on the “Black Bourse” (from the purchaser’s point of view) from twenty to the gold dollar in 1932 to the average of forty or more of to-day. The Soviets must have suffered a serious loss when the dollar dropped, but they still want dollars. The Soviet Union, officially or individually, will do almost anything to get *valuta*. Intourist flashes all sorts of trinkets, souvenirs, presents for the folks at home before the eyes of tourists, in its hotels, in ex-palaces, in former monasteries open to tourists. Nor are most of these things expensive, in dollars. I bought my wife a beautiful pair of embroidered Russian-leather evening slippers—which turned out to be just large enough for our eleven-year-old daughter!—for ninety-five cents, including the inevitable lack of change.

In Kiev I was offered rubles in front of Torgsin by four persons, one of them a woman and all of them resembling New York’s street ticket-speculators, during the fifteen or twenty minutes I stood there. The usual way to sell *valuta* or buy rubles, whichever crime the individual is committing, is to sidle up to the stranger in a Torgsin store who displays foreign money and offer to meet him outside. In Erivan one *valuta*-hungry fellow did not even wait to sidle. He offered me 18.50 openly, with the cashier looking on. I smiled amiably and turned away, not having been born the day before.

Torgsin stores were first established for the convenience of foreign engineers, experts, and other Soviet

employees who were paid in the moneys of their homelands and to coax hoarded *valuta* out of hiding. Today Torgsin money orders and other remittances from abroad are much more common in Torgsin stores than actual money—and incidentally, they run about one-half the volume now that they did at their peak; it was a novelty then, gradually relatives living outside the Union tired of it or ran out of money to send. But you still see long lines of people in Torgsin stores with nothing but postal or some other form of money orders in their hands. Tourists or foreign residents and all those “in good standing” who present actual dollars or any other *valuta* get their change in any and all kinds of foreign currency the cashier has on hand. The only change on money orders consists of coupons good for future Torgsin purchases—it’s a wonder it is not in rubles at the “official” rate!

But although Torgsin stores accept any money on earth except rubles, that Erivan cashier would not take mine. There were only money orders in sight, so I suppose ‘way down in Armenia cashiers are not familiar with foreign money in the flesh. I raised a rumpus; got a manager, who made the bleary-eyed old bureaucrat peering through the waist-high wicketed peephole accept the dime and quarter he had just refused. But first he looked the coins up in a catalogue containing pictures of them; studied and compared them for a long time. Then he laboriously prepared another bill similar to the one the clerk had made out when I pointed to my intended purchases, filled out a check, in seven lines, and asked me to sign it, then passed all the papers and all his personal responsibility in the

case to the more nearly intelligent cashier at the next wicket.

He made out another bill and another check (only three or four lines this time) for me to sign, wrote the story of the transaction in a big ledger, and gave me the original bill, stamped with his approval. Only then did I get my twelve-cent bottle of wine (bottle and all) and a twenty-three-cent can of peaches, both wrapped in good white paper. Time: thirty-three minutes; men involved: five besides myself. Meanwhile the component parts of the several queues were all trying to thrust their heads into the waist-high rat-hole windows along the cashiers' barricade, in a vain effort to get some attention.

The native who is caught selling rubles for *valuta* gets six months or so at ten per cent of his regular wages, or he may get a trip to a prison camp in Siberia or in the far north of Russia proper; on a very unlucky day he may even get shot. The foreigner who gets caught buying rubles seems to run only the risk of being escorted to the frontier. So you see there is really extraterritoriality in Sovietland. The buying of *valuta* and spending it at once in Torgsin seems to be a minor crime; it is hoarding it that is a capital sin—yet the bets are that much is hoarded. My own impression is that the Soviet authorities wink at the "Black Bourse." It would be so easy to catch tourists buying rubles, or spending them; the argus-eyed GPU could, in fact, challenge any tourist who produces a ruble to show that he got it at a bank. But they don't. I suspect they say to themselves, "Oh, well, it all brings in *valuta*, which can't easily get out of the country again;

and what do we care if some of our people spend a lot of hard-earned rubles for a dollar?"

Many Intourist "guests" come out of Russia apparently as innocent on the ruble situation as when they went in. Others of course are afraid, afraid of being cheated, for one thing, for ruble notes of the denominations of ten and upwards are called *chernovitz*, so that a bill worth a hundred rubles bears the word and figure 10. Some of the more timid souls have what they consider a clever way of keeping within the law and confounding the GPU—they "borrow" a few hundred rubles from some foreign resident and send a check to his American bank when they get back home.

You run across many of the old-style American banknotes, some of them dated the last century, in Sovietland. Two-dollar bills especially seem to have found a haven there. Perhaps they prefer the hardships of Soviet life to the obloquy and the mutilation to which they are subjected in a superstitious country. You feel like asking some of those old bills how they liked their years of Soviet exile. I brought one of them home with me—yes, for once I had that much left—just to be kind to it, not in the hope that some third-degree master or some handwriting expert could make it talk and tell us what, after all, is a ruble.

I suppose it was in order to prepare our souls for Russia that the Germans stripped the train to Riga of toilet paper before turning it over to the Lithuanians. It is hard to change lifelong habits overnight and I had to call for help in the first Russian-style train, barely out of Riga—with an American woman listening, too.

You forget to take it with you and, what may be still more disastrous, to bring it away again. I assume that toilet paper is bourgeois and that all users of it were liquidated. But I am told the Russians never were civilized in that particular department of life.

Of course the older generation, to which I belong only in years, will resent my mentioning so—shall we call it commonplace?—a subject. But it is one of the most important matters to be considered in any trip to the Soviet Union. I assume that travel agencies are puritanical rather than careless or wantonly cruel in not recommending a supply of this all-important substance to their clients. You can't buy it; you can't even steal it, unless from some more foresighted fellow-visitor. Yes, I know our Soviet friends are very busy "building Socialism." But would it really greatly retard the second Five Year Plan or wreck the alleged program for the World Revolution if, say, just one shipload of toilet paper were imported yearly?

Incidentally there is not a bathtub or a washbowl stopper in all the USSR. Once an unusually bright and resourceful chambermaid got me a cork. At all other times I used wads of newspaper—if I could find them.

The difficulties of life in the Soviet Union are incomprehensible to the American who has never left home. But I especially challenge the brightest of my untraveled fellow-countrymen to picture to themselves the state of its toilets. To say that they are unspeakable is to put it so mildly as to sound silly. I doubt whether even the cavemen were as bad, so purely animal—no, you can't say that without insulting the great majority of animals; for they seek a place apart and even try, in



many cases, to efface the evidence of their depredations. On the other hand, nowhere in the Soviet Union did I see a kiosk of the kind to be found on Paris boulevards, or adults displaying any such frankness toward nature's behests as reigns in most Latin countries.

European train toilets are always coeducational, which makes it that much worse. On one journey I made in the USSR the toilet at the end of our car remained persistently locked. Only after I had won the gratitude of the trainman by giving him most of the unappetizing food an Intourist hotel had provided for my trip did he produce the key—and disclose the fact that he had a bushel of tomatoes hidden in the noisome place. Another time I found a spotlessly clean toilet at the end of the car I was in. One of the train's two GPU officers protested against my entering it, but I do not take orders easily. Next time I tried it, however, I found a bayonet on guard against the danger of my abusing the GPU's special privileges.

There is almost no news from outside the Soviet Union in those flimsy little sheets Sovietland miscalls newspapers; no advertisements, to speak of, except Government propaganda. Proletariat activities, strikes, banditry, and anything else that can be considered a "horrible example" of life in a capitalistic society monopolize the foreign date lines. "News" of a domestic nature consists of exciting tales of industrial rivalries within Russian factories. But, strangely enough, much space is given to self-criticism, ruthless self-criticism sometimes—in industrial, not political matters. These frank stories of workers and methods

within Soviet factories, which sometimes take the form of the American "razzberry," appear even in the English-language newspapers with which Sovietland purports to keep its foreign visitors informed of the progress or the retrogression of mankind.

## CHAPTER VIII

### RUSSIAN MEN AND WOMEN

*Queer Fellow, the Russian . . . Sex Equality? Certainly! . . . But There Are "Valuta Girls"*

THE Russians, at least under Soviet rule, are a very serious people. They don't go in for fun and laughter. A sense of humor is more needed in the USSR to-day than new shoes. By which I do not mean that they cannot be witty. Once when I was fretting at the stupid and inexplicable delay involved in sending a cable, a ragged old woman with gnarled hands behind me said in a gentle voice of culture that contrasted incongruously with her life-battered face, "We've got over being excited." A man in a bread-line looked us solemnly in the eye and said, "Yes, but *we* are the bosses." It was sarcasm so subtle that even a GPU man at his elbow could not have been stupid enough to try to take him to task for it. Said a plump young woman in a government bureau to my careless companion, in the sweetest of voices, "Do you know who is going to bring the door in after you?"

Personally I found the Russians very friendly, to Americans, to most "guests," for that is what we are to them, not foreigners. They did not strike me as fierce, except when pushed on from behind, and certainly the dreaded Red Army looks like rather a harm-

less lot of naïve schoolboys from the country. A Russian hates to shoot people, I was told. Yeah, but Stalin is not a Russian; nor are some others of the eight—or is it nine?—who are credited with running things. So I guarantee nothing.

The people of Russia to-day impress the hurried visitor as drab, like their costumes, with a hint of silent endurance in their faces. There is no spring in their walk, little evidence that life is a pleasure, just a patient seriousness that may be a Russian inheritance from generations of repressions and acquiescence in hardships. Yet one sees hope also, or at least a sense of material security in some of those rather expressionless faces. "We no longer have to worry about the future," they say. But like those who had "gilt-edged" investments in 1929, like the holders of insurance policies, like any one who lays up money for his old age in a capitalistic country, they may be fooling themselves. The régime that is guaranteeing them this assured future may not be able to carry out its guarantees when old age comes upon them.

Certainly those who have accepted the status quo of to-day are sincere, hard workers. Certainly the Russians you see outside Russia are less likable than those inside. There is little visible envy of our good clothes, our ability to travel, not the look of prisoners gazing upon free men which I had expected, but rather a kind of pity for us, as if they felt that it must be painful to our consciences to get all these advantages we have as wicked "exploiters" of the work of others.

The Russian word for "hurry" has five syllables; there is no word in the language for "efficiency." Karl

Radek himself, descending from his palatial penthouse overlooking the Moskba River, told a gathering of tourists that Russians have only twenty per cent of American efficiency, that it takes five men to do what one man will do in the same length of time in the United States. Time means nothing to them even when they are eager to produce a given effect within a given time. There is less insanity than in high-pressure countries, more low mentality. An ill-balanced people, inclined to run from very bad to fanatical for good, yet, like the Chinese, so different yet so like them, a very likable people—the masses, that is, and in the USSR to-day one is hardly conscious of any one except the masses.

Take the most temperamental person you know—preferably a woman, for the Slav is distinctly feminine—a person with no sense or feeling for order, so completely lacking mechanical ability as to be unable to drive a nail, with little pride in personal appearance, rather a pose of preferring to rough it and scorn the refinements of civilization. Add to that a tendency to seek gratuitously for hardship as a kind of personal martyrdom, a self-imposed chastisement for nothing in particular, unless it be a troubled conscience or as a proof of will-power; a person with no very strong feeling for cleanliness, more inclined to put up with unnecessary annoyances than to complain or take the trouble or have the intestinal fortitude to try to remedy them. Add to all this a lack of any great inborn ambition: a person content to plod along in the old way, but capable of lashing himself to hard and inefficient effort under propaganda or some other outside spurring, in

a sudden effort to catch up overnight (since he knows his enthusiasm will not last long) with his neighbors, whom he has suddenly waked up and discovered are far ahead of him. Multiply such a person, preferably a woman, by 160,000,000 or so and you have the Russia, the USSR of to-day, as it strikes the casual visitor.

The Soviet Union makes much to-do about its alleged emancipation of women. As a matter of fact, the position of women has changed much less under Soviet rule than untraveled Americans realize, and in some ways it has changed for the worse. We all know that eastern Europe has always made cattle of its women, working them in the fields like oxen. Women worked at men's jobs in Russia even in tzarist days, and while their present situation is a startling change from that of women in the United States, "where women are eating white bread and don't know it," the revolution has merely given them the privilege and the misfortune of competing with men in every line, instead of mainly in the fields. As Will Rogers has said, "If a woman shouts for liberty and equality in Russia, they hand her a pick and shovel and tell her to go out and dig herself some." There is some truth in the Soviet assertion that the American woman exploits her man economically. But to my simple taste this making draft mares of Russian women is worse.

Most men in the United States prefer to support their wives. Russia's full-bosomed young women of to-day say they would scorn to have a man support them, sometimes adding something to the effect that "the average American girl is a fungus growth." We are

not, of course, talking about housekeeping, but about the economic burden under which so many American men crumple up. Women shovel sand, lay bricks, carry building stones, dig subways, build automobiles, work in sawmills, run tractors and trolley-cars, join train crews, become barbers, doctors, dentists . . . it would be a waste of space to try to enumerate all the jobs that women work at in the Soviet Union. A list of the jobs they don't do might serve the purpose, if one could think of even the beginning of such a list. More than in any other country or time there is sex equality in the USSR. But the general impression it leaves, at least to American visitors, is of an entire nation made up of such men as send their wives out to do washing.

Boy-and-girl courtesy is merely boy-and-boy courtesy, sexless comradeship, in the Russia of to-day. It is bad form to show any consideration for a woman which you would not show for a man, to give her any of the little attentions or advantages we old-fashioned people feel is due her sex. Russian girls actually resent any politeness based on their gender.

The girls and women of Sovietland strike you as almost all of our factory-worker type, or worse. A nation of factory workers may be an ideal, but it is not mine. They are very frank in speech, discussing abortions or "free love" with a complete stranger as placidly as American girls talk of a football score. While many of them are sexually attractive in a heavy, full-bosomed way, they are all barren of sensuous stimulation. So, for that matter, is Soviet life in general, from street scenes to motion-picture films.

There are good points in the Soviet design for living, but why destroy all the refinements built up through the ages, such as table manners and feminine daintiness, which are among the good things of life? Yet even table manners, it seems, are relative. Russians lie on the table to eat, inhale their soup, pick their teeth with fork or fingers, but it is a horrible breach of Russian etiquette, even in some ardently communistic circles, to pick up a slice of bread in the fingers or to pare fruit without impaling it on a fork. So I suppose there are equally divergent points of view as to what constitutes feminine charm. Certainly the broad-beamed proletariat women of Russia seem to thrive under hard manual labor, under hardships American women would not consider endurable. Few of them would take prizes in an American beauty contest, but in one of healthy animals they would draw many a blue ribbon.

With few exceptions they all go in for sunburn, and they certainly get it. Even the lightest blondes eventually get a leathery tan, and sun-bathing gives them a tint that is not suggestive of cleanliness, even though some of them are magnificently bronzed from crown to toe—as I know from having been swimming with them. Some of them look like polished bronze statues and one comes gradually to prefer this hardy hue to the shade-grown white skins we used, at least, to admire. But the prettiest girls seldom look dainty, and in many cases undue exposure to sunshine makes them look coarser and more peasant-like and less desirable, gives them a grimy tinge that emphasizes the scarcity of soap and hot water.

If cleanliness is next to godliness, the USSR is in-



deed well on the way to a Godless society. Probably I was not properly shocked by the poverty, the uncleanness, the oxification of women in Russia. For I have seen as bad in Albania, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Bulgaria—if I didn't want to go back there some day I might even say in Italy—and worse in China and the Andes. It certainly is the realm of the Great Unwashed, this broad land of Johnny Awfulitch. Maybe it is all due to lack of opportunity, of soap and water and the space and privacy in which to use them. But it is probably also due to the long hard winters and the habit of not undressing often because of the cold. And perhaps it is the style to look grimy, a resolution not to ape the hated bourgeois, who used to be so clean-looking. In peasant villages women take a mouthful of water, squirt it on their hands, and wash their faces. Yes, though I cannot go the whole hog in testifying to the disgusting conditions reported by some virulent anti-Bolshevik writers, Sovietland leaves much to be desired in the use of soap and hot water.

That daintiness has not been entirely wiped out, however, is proved by the fact that many—those who purport to be experts or connoisseurs on this subject say millions—of very attractive girls will play wife to any comely foreign gentlemen for a bar or two of perfumed toilet soap.

“Guides” and their like will tell you blithely and with the air of believing exactly what they are saying, that there are no prostitutes in the Soviet Union. Those to whom facts mean more than slogans will tell you there are few in proportion to the population, gen-

erally adding, "because there is too much amateur competition." What professional prostitutes there are, they say, are to be found in the back streets and find their clientèle among "bums" and country yokels and transients for a night or two in ports and cities. Marriage is easy; both parties to it usually have a job; abortions are free; the State takes care of the child; why, then, be or go to a prostitute?

The Soviet Republic is a very materialistic civilization that faces facts without blushing. It openly recognizes the fact that boys and girls from their later teens onward take pleasure in sleeping together. Its attitude is "Go ahead and have your fun. You will only be young once. If you want a child, all right. If not, it is your inalienable right to have an abortion, at the expense of the State. It makes no particular difference whether you are married or not; there are no bastards in the Soviet Union."

A Soviet doctor told us he did an average of eighteen abortions a day. If the girl looked as if her offspring would be a desirable addition to the population, particularly if she and the man both had a job, he talked to her of the pleasures of motherhood, urged her to let nature take its course. But if she insisted, he had no other choice than to perform the operation.

"Race suicide? Our attitude on that subject is just the antithesis of that in Germany or Italy. The present régime doesn't want the population to increase, at least for the present. The peasants can't feed us all as it is."

Said another Soviet doctor to a professional colleague from America who spoke his language, "Don't

go out on the street looking for it; patronize your own."

"Meaning . . . ?"

"Guides."

"But . . ."

"Oh, I know. They have to be careful. And I don't mean to imply that all or perhaps even a majority of them . . . But . . ."

There seems to be no question that "guides" occasionally do male tourists a favor not listed among their official duties. It is just about as unquestioned that they cease to be guides, if nothing worse, if they get caught at it, and that the prospective traveler need have no fear of being seduced by the more or less comely young women who minister to his linguistic needs.

In Rostov groups of young women promenade openly along the main street past the Intourist hotel, arm in arm. They call them "*valuta* girls" in this classless land of pseudonyms. In Batum and Odessa they are the best-dressed women in the city, thanks to foreign sailors with foreign money. The "*valuta* girls" of Moscow will not look at a Russian man armed only with rubles. Yet I was never solicited during the month I spent in the Soviet Union, and that is much more than I can say of far less time in Paris, Berlin, Vienna, and many another city I could name. But when any Soviet spokesman maintains in all solemnity that there is no prostitution in the USSR it is at least because the same word often has different meanings in different lands.

I know personally of male tourists to whom the Russian euphonism "Let's go play" proved the sesame to a pleasant evening. It invariably began, I am told, with the phrase, "I am not doing this for money." But there always drifted into the conversation before the parting some reference to how little one earns in Sovietland, how welcome a bar of perfumed soap, a pair of silk stockings, would be . . . There are so many things any normal girl craves that are not available in the USSR, at least for rubles. Even rubles are better than nothing; but if your "present" is in *valuta*—well, unless you want to go and play again the next night you'd better stay off her beat.

Manicurists have been known to work outside working hours in the Soviet Union, even as in some "capitalistic" countries. A high-school girl of sixteen confided to a tourist with Russian at his command that she just didn't have money enough to get along . . . and she was so interested in her school work, so determined to get all the education available. . . .

"My room? Not very far, by street-car. No, mother works at night, but she earns so little. . . ."

Of course this ambitious young lady, and no doubt the Soviet régime, would scorn the suggestion that she is a prostitute.

Three little girls, all under fifteen, were begging of tourists on the streets of Odessa.

"Why don't you work?" asked a man they were importuning.

"Work! There isn't any work, in Odessa."

Said the tourist, not from perversion but merely for information, "Will you go and play with me?"

"Any place, any time!" shrieked the three in chorus.

The fact remains that there is probably no *organized* "vice," no "houses of ill fame" in the USSR to-day, and that in most cases a woman does not have to peddle her charms. But to some the work available may be more disagreeable than prostitution and some go with men because they happen to like fornication, which the Soviet régime considers perfectly natural. If there is anything "vicious" about it in the eyes of the authorities, it is the acceptance of money or other material reward for a merely mutual pleasure. They seem to have no objection whatever to foreign experts on government pay-rolls having a girl live with them if she chooses, even in the apartments furnished them by the Government—rather the contrary, because she makes one more source of information for the GPU.

If I have been offensively outspoken on this subject, please bear in mind that the USSR is a very outspoken country—with very different ideas from our own, whatever we may think of them—and not given to hiding facts under a puritanical exterior. All those in a position to have any worth-while opinion on the subject agree that there are fewer cases of the "social diseases" in what is now the Soviet Union than in the days of the czar. For one thing there are "prophylactic stations," just as there were for our soldiers in France, available to the majority, where no questions are asked, not even the name. Tourists are taken to the "Profilactoriums" in several Russian cities, but these prove to be really educational and rehabilitation institutions for prostitutes—where the inmates, by the way, are on

the average very young. There is no required examination of prostitutes, but if one of them is convicted of passing on disease—and knew she had it—it may mean a prison camp or even the firing-squad.

## CHAPTER IX

### TRAVEL IN SOVIETLAND

*"Hard Wagon" . . . Still Jolting Along . . . It's  
Not Like Home*

I HAVE no intention of burdening you, much less myself, with a day-by-day chronicle of my wanderings in the Soviet Union. So let's see if we can't confine ourselves to some of the outstanding snapshots that journey leaves etched in my memory.

The string on which such pearls must be strung is of course the Soviet railway system. For travel in Sovietland, except where steamers run, means trains. Roads? Yes, but once out of sight of almost any large city they become terrible, incorrigible, scattered with cobblestones if they are paved at all and much more likely still to be merely bottomless mud, just like the roads in most of eastern Europe, only more so. They say you *can* larrup a Ford over many miles of them in a favorable season, but it is no pleasure jaunt even to the most confirmed machine-sadist.

One of the principal Soviet plans or threats is "technically to overhaul and then exceed capitalistic countries . . ." more specifically "to surpass by 1943 the United States of 1929 in industrial production and the technical equipment of industry." Well, if you are worrying yourself sick about our technical and indus-

trial eclipse, just ride for a day or two on a Russian train and then imagine them overhauling us.

Talk about "hurry and wait" in the army! Intourist gets its "guests" down to the station an hour or two before the train is due, to say nothing of arrives. I suppose they need our space in the hotel for newcomers—in a classless society the individual is nothing, the mass everything. That ride to the station is likely to be in a bus in the last stages of disintegration, the wall of the seat in front torturing the knees. But one of the advantages of traveling on an "open order" instead of with one of the many conducted groups that swarm like wasps from a broken nest over the fixed itineraries of the Soviet Union all summer long, is that the lone tourist often rides from hotel to station or station to hotel like a king arriving for a royal wedding, all alone, except for the inevitable guide—rather flattering to be met by a young and sometimes attractive woman wherever you go—in the upholstered depths of at least a Fiat, perhaps even a Lincoln, from which you look down your nose at envious pedestrians and patient crowds of people waiting for a street-car.

The average Russian "express" consists of a dozen "hard wagons," one baggage-car, and one "soft" car that is usually by no means full, though the "hard" ones invariably are from the start. Yes, Russian trains are hard, at least for the overwhelming majority of us, and incredibly slow. But you get a wide, full length shelf-berth all to yourself. Moreover, if you are under the wing of Intourist, the trainman—he is just as likely to be a woman—who has your particular car in his keeping will eventually furnish you with a mattress, pillow,



blanket, and, sealed up inside a denim bag, two sheets, a pillowcase, *and* a towel, all snow-white and reputed to be, in fact giving every outward evidence of really being, sterilized. The Soviet brand of brakeman-porter is as slow as he is solemn, but to Intourist "guests" at least he is courteous almost to obsequiousness, though I have never known a foreign traveler to give him more tip than a cigarette now and then. Natives bring their own bedding; or the whole affair costs non-tourists only five paper rubles. Of course the wise man who can afford it carries his own soap and that other indispensable to good living which I have already too often mentioned.

One of our most intrepid explorers and bravest adventurers—at least on the lecture platform—goes to great lengths in his story of a Soviet journey to show that train travel in the USSR is the most horrible experience in the world. It's all in the point of view. Except for lack of cleanliness, sanitation, and speed, Russian "hard wagons" seem to me very much preferable to any other long-distance third-class trains I have ever boarded, and I have boarded a lot of them. Those long shelf-benches make all the difference between misery and comparative comfort. You have a whole berth-bench to yourself for the entire trip and you do not have to fight and connive and conspire with your fellow-travelers to hold it against new travelers picked up along the way.

The "hard wagon" is divided into half a dozen sections, each with three stories of bunks or wide-open shelves, the third or topmost one normally confined to baggage and the other two each assigned to a single

passenger. All tickets are numbered; or rather, each ticket-holder must also have a "space ticket," as in our Pullmans. Every section has its door, unfortunately. I opened and closed thirty-six doors between my berth and the dining-car every time I went from one to the other on my journey from Moscow to Rostov-on-Don, and Russians do not close doors gently. There are really six travelers to a "compartment" even in these gala days when the baggage shelf is rarely occupied by a passenger. For the wide Russian gauge gives room for two fore-and-aft shelves beyond the aisle, the top one furnished with a movable grating to keep the occupant from inadvertently disembarking seat-first through the window during the night.

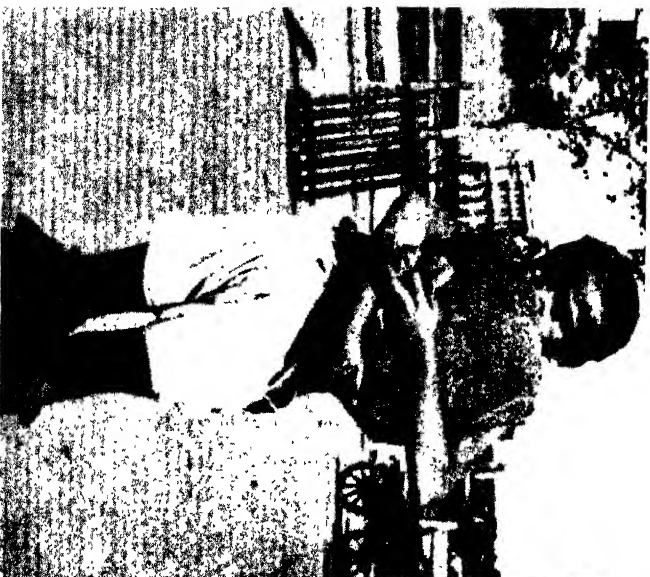
You can't travel and sit up at one and the same time in Sovietland, at least in "hard wagon." Perhaps they are afraid you might take notice. Although the top passenger shelf can be let down, every Soviet traveler insists on his whole shelf even by day. People lie abed half-dressed and read, nap, smoke, talk, eat, sleep—do anything except sit up and look at the scenery. It is like living in a traveling hospital—where the ailments never include weakness of lungs or loss of voice.

That Moscow-to-Rostov train had left Leningrad at eleven Thursday night and was due in Rostov at midnight Saturday. Eleven hundred and seventy miles in forty-nine hours seems even slower than that in a train jolting along like a string of wagons over cobblestones, the truck beneath you creaking and jangling and bumping until you are sure even in your dreams that it is about to fall apart. From Leningrad to Batum—I did not keep track after that, but I can guarantee things

were no better—I covered 3680 kilometers (2352 miles) in 110½ hours. In other words my Soviet travels averaged 21.284 miles an hour, though in almost all cases I traveled on the fastest “expresses.”

Trains to and from the Caucasus are packed, at least in summer, by paid vacationists; many trains, huge trains, but, alas, unbelievably slow trains. If only they would learn the value of speed and precision, how many more people could have vacations in the Caucasus. But if you use the abacus instead of your head I suppose it is hard to realize that doubling the speed doubles the rolling-stock. Huge trains naturally lack speed, no doubt, for all those deep-voiced whistles that seem to carry one home. But if long strings of oil-tank cars can tear past at enviable velocity, surely the crying need for more passenger-cars could be solved without building any more of them.

Soviet travelers have none of the stand-offishness of those in capitalistic Europe. On that long ride from Moscow to Rostov—and that is a short run compared with many train journeys in Sovietland—the couple opposite were more than friendly, constantly helpful, and in spite of their appearance highly intelligent, especially the man, with a face so completely ruined by smallpox that he looked like an unusually gruesome death's-head while asleep and far from an agreeable picture when he was awake. He was a marvel at talking by signs and with the rare word or two we had in common. The discussions we carried on could hardly have been more thorough if we had been born in the same town. We shared tea, cherries—a saucerful sold



At Last He Reached the Head of the Bread-Line,  
So Hungry He Gnawed at His Purchase All the  
Way Home.



She Has Already Been Waiting Four Days to  
Find Room on a Train. In the Background Is  
One of Russia's Lofly Spittoons.



In Sovietland Foreigners Are Identified by Their Good Footwear.

for a ruble at many stations—took turns in watching our baggage and going for hot water. There was lots of food for sale at important stations, plenty of cooked chickens (and none of them looked overripe), milk at most of them—but, alas, even if it were boiled, as milk must be in the Soviet Union, the bottles had aged newspaper corks.

But it grows tiresome in time to have ugly faces, no matter how intelligent and obliging the people behind them, staring within arm's length at your every move like monkeys for thirty-six hours. Then of course Soviet travelers want all train windows and doors tight shut by night and often by day; otherwise they could not develop to the full the aroma Johnny Awfulitch loves so much. But they yield to the idiosyncrasies of "guests" in this matter more often than most continental Europeans.

It seems there are more reasons than one to keep train windows closed. Fellow-travelers, trainmen, and signs constantly warned us against pickpockets and sneak-thieves, particularly thievery through the windows. Begging children and all sorts of suspicious-looking gentry swarm at every station. They slink through the cars, even run back and forth under the train. Dozens of ragged boys offer matches, crumpled cigarettes, uninviting edibles, and nothing at all for sale. There are no platform tickets, except at a few large terminals, no suggestion of control—that would be too much order for Russia.

In view of all this I should have known better than to put my small bag, containing my passport, return ticket from Sovietland to New York, and other things

it would have been annoying to lose, on the floor under my shelf, but luckily behind a gunnysack full of something hard and unenticing. I piled my other belongings high on a shelf over the window, and slept unusually well. In fact, while the purr of an oil-furnace will rob me of sleep at home I nearly always slept soundly during the baker's dozen of my Soviet nights when I was jolting through the darkness on a plank shelf.

There was much hubbub during that particular night, especially toward dawn, when I found that a Siberiak girl and two Georgian men had lost three pieces of baggage and a pair of slippers among them. Some one had found the iron rod with which such jobs are done—six feet long and the thickness of a pencil, with a crook at the end. There was a long argument with the trainman as to why train doors couldn't be locked during the night, but that evidently would be too much trouble. Long talk and much sympathy ensued, and all day long the Siberiak girl left off playing cards now and then to weep silently into her dirty towel.

Thereafter I used my valuables as a pillow, the train pillow as a supplementary mattress. I met one Russian-Canadian whose passport was stolen during one of these nocturnal raids. He will know better hereafter than to carry it anywhere except on his person.

On the other hand any but the pettiest stealing seems to be rare in hotels, at least from tourists. One morning I inadvertently left nine dimes, a Canadian penny, and a two-*lat* piece on my bed table. How do I know exactly? Because I always remember things not worth remembering. Well, two of the dimes were stolen, obviously by the chambermaid. She thought I

wouldn't know there were nine of them! Another took one of four cigarettes, but neither of the two cigars beside them. Still another, somewhere, took all the thin socks in my valise. Thin socks are rare and much coveted in the Soviet Union. Probably whoever she was thought they were silk, whereas they were really rayon "thirds" at ten cents a pair on Broadway. Other tourists reported similar inconsequential thefts, especially of the daintier forms of women's undergarments; no tourist, as far as I heard, lost anything of great importance in hotels.

All Soviet expresses seem to stop for fifteen minutes to half an hour soon after leaving the terminal, as if to screw up their courage to go on. Broken nights are due to long stops rather than to hard beds. The uproar which always attends the boarding of a train in Sovietland dies down an hour or two after the start. But each car—at least those I rode in—has a "radio room" with an operator, sometimes armed only with a phonograph and the most atrocious records obtainable, from which pour forth horrible noises most of the day and a lot of the night. Loud-speakers in trains, stations, streets—they'll be fitting graves with aërials and earphones before I can get safely into mine. If you think most American radio programs are unendurable—and who doesn't?—you ought to hear Russian programs! One imagines the same chaos, too, in Soviet broadcasting stations as in other departments of Soviet life, for when the traveler is tortured with long phonograph-record broadcasts of familiar airs they don't even keep the phonograph wound up.



The crowd, of course, likes these abominable programs that are ground out incessantly in government broadcasting stations or from battered phonograph records, though that proves they should be back in prehistoric caves. But Communism, even more than democracy, overrides the desires of any individual with the rudimentary beginnings of taste and compels him to see and hear what the mob likes—or poke out his eyes and eardrums.

Kindly as the Russians are, they have no respect whatever for a sleeper. They slam doors, hold boisterous congresses over nothing in the middle of the night, start a gratuitous uproar very early in the morning, as if they didn't have all day for it. Car repairing, howls of ragged boys vending something or other, make life hideous every time the train stops during the night.

Wakened early every morning by the invariable inconsiderate hubbub of all Eastern peoples, one keeps the sheet over one's face as a protection against the flies that make life miserable on Russian trains. You can't sleep and you can't keep awake, just worry through the day. Now and then you stand to gaze out the window. Russia is so vast! Yet you are startled by the sameness of the landscape. You wake up in the morning and wonder if the train has been standing still all night, in spite of the rattling and the banging, the bumping and the hoarse-voiced whistling.

In Sovietland the head-brakeman may be a woman and the brakemen men: sex has nothing to do with it, which is quite as it should be. Yet I confess that somehow I never quite got used to a train "man" six months along in the natural calling of her sex wielding a brush-

broom on the car floors or standing at the foot of the car steps with a lantern at three o'clock in the morning. It is an absurd, old-fashioned notion, of course; but somehow my capitalistic background tells me she should be in bed at such an hour, and coddled.

Does Intourist send its "guests" by night so we won't see too much? More likely so we can see more—in the cities we said we wanted to see or which Intourist suggested we ought to see. If there is clever trickery at work anywhere in the Sovietland tourist itinerary it is rather in keeping us on the road by night so they won't have to provide so many hotel beds. But the real facts probably are that they are doing the best they can or know how, which may not be very well from our Western point of view, but is not so bad, after all, from the Russian viewpoint.

The people of the Soviet Union seem to be always traveling, perhaps in the familiar hope of getting away from their troubles. Night or day, crowds of patient men and women, especially women and children, lie in all sorts of attitudes for a large radius about every important station, on the steps, the platforms, the ground, any space at all. The whole vicinity is packed with people sitting or lying on their baggage, and the moment a train comes in or is made up they charge it as no Russian troops ever did the enemy. Why stop at local stations at all? Just to tantalize these patient throngs? At way-stations hordes heavy with baggage of all uncouth kinds run wild-eyed up and down the platforms, women with babies, born and unborn, trying to find a car with room for them, only to be rudely repulsed and almost all of them pushed off like hoboes.

when the train goes on. Those left behind settle down patiently to wait for the next train, next day, perhaps several days later. They may have been weeks getting official permission to travel and days getting far enough up in the queue to buy a ticket (Soviet ticket offices open only half an hour before train-time) but no standees are allowed; a full-length shelf for every traveler, which is all to the good—for those of us who get one.

It was usually my bad luck to get the lower front "berth," no doubt considered the choice one by Intourist minions. Even the back lower shelf is below the window opening, and the front one is breathless. Finally, from Sevastopol to Dnieprostroi, my prayers were answered and I got the top back shelf I had so often coveted. It is a great place of vantage in hot weather, for there you get all the breeze there is. But if it is tiresome to lie down all the time, it is doubly so on a top shelf, difficult to climb into and a bother to get down from when you want to stand in the aisle or the corridor for a change. Nor is seeing the scenery sidewise or over the top of your head as easy or as much fun as you may think. You are more likely to see instead that the flies on the big car window against the telegraph wires, moving swiftly up and down, make a comic sheet-music. I leave the suggestion to some of our jazz kings who have run out of inspiration, for heaven knows they need something new.

Nor is a silk raincoat so hot as a mattress on a plank bed, or an overnight-bag as a pillow; and for once Intourist had failed to provide me with bedding. I don't for a moment believe that hotel manager at

Sevastopol lied to me. But he was mistaken when he said the trainman would furnish me the usual accommodations. To begin with, the trainman was a woman, so there was no use of arguing. The princely chauffeur and the bedraggled interpreter who had rushed me to the station in kingly style had plenty of time to run back to the hotel and borrow a blanket and pillow and a pair of sheets, such as other hotels had furnished, for that is the way Intourist gets you to your trains. But I suppose that would have cost gasoline. Or perhaps that hard night was to make up for the "soft" accommodations—the usual European compartment with four upholstered berths—I had enjoyed by Intourist mistake from Tiflis to Batum. Oh, well, I more or less agree with Mussolini that too much comfort is enervating, so let it go at that.

Soviet trainmen wake you an hour before you need to get off. In fact, there would always be plenty of time if they waked you at your destination. You don't have to dress, you probably won't want to shave, and anyway, trains never treat their stations hot-headedly in the USSR. Of course, if your destination is the train's terminus any delay in getting rid of you would keep the train crew from getting home, and in a classless society the trainman is more important than the passenger.

## CHAPTER X

### SOUTHWARD

*Steppe by Steppe . . . Rostov-on-Don . . . A Collective Farm . . . Soviet Funerals*

ALL afternoon and all the next day rambling across the steppes on a wooden shelf of what the Russians call an express train. Endless vistas of sunflowers, alternating with oats, wheat, corn, potatoes, and of course hay, but always in lesser quantities, as if the sunflowers were reluctant to leave their colleagues any space, jealous of their ruling very long over the train-seen landscape. Vast stretches of wheat, now being cut or already in shock; oats ripening; but always coming back to sunflowers, seas of sunflowers; the sun setting, the brilliant morning sun rising on great fields, big as my whole farm, of ripening sunflowers. They cut the heads off when the time comes, use sunflower-seed oil where we do olive oil and, I believe, have ruined many a machine by using it as machine oil. Children and adults go about munching sunflower seeds, melon and squash and other seeds, for that matter, and spitting the litter of the hulls about, as in China.

It was not merely the dead-flat country that word "steppe" calls up, but lots of rolling and almost hilly and some wooded country, greener and much more fully cultivated than our prairies. There were no

signs of machines in the fields. Many freight-trains rumbled past us. Oxen dragged rather pathetic wagons along dusty but passable roads. Churches bulked above the other buildings in most towns; mostly wooden or log houses, but also some large ones of brick and single rows of smaller ones. No rain—in fact, I had no rain on all my trip in the Soviet Union, except a sprinkle in Leningrad and in Yalta, until those deluges at Kiev that escorted me out of the country. The last seventeen years have been lucky weather, the subjects of Stalin will tell you.

I wore through the day, reading, napping, and getting off at a few stations—really the only hardships of travel in Sovietland is the slowness of Russian trains and of Russian minds . . . and doing your own laundry!—and rode into Rostov-on-Don at 10:20, to be instantly picked up by a very attractive guide. She brought immense relief to my car companions and trainman, who were convinced that so simple-minded a person as I would be eaten alive the instant he stepped out into the night in a strange city. The guide got a porter for my baggage, put me into—not a Lincoln, perhaps, but a fine big car—all alone, climbed in with me and drove me in style to that hotel “under reparations.” But it did have hot baths, and after thirty-six hours in a “hard wagon” you are quite willing to pay half a “gold” ruble for a bath.

There is an incredible amount of noise all night long in Moscow, in all the cities of the Soviet Union, more or less in proportion to their size. Certainly the “ideal civilization,” if it ever comes to pass, will abolish

church bells, factory whistles, automobile horns, screeching street-car wheels, and a score of other quite unnecessary noises. Sovietland still has them all, except the church bells. Most of those have been melted down or their ringing forbidden, or, like the ancient chimes on the Gate of the Redeemer in Moscow, they peal out now in the *Internationale*. Besides, the Orthodox Church, unlike the Catholic, never did make life miserable with a din of bells. But Rostov, for example, has its new striking clock-tower almost directly over the Intourist hotel, and its factory whistles made a hideous shrieking every half-hour from before daylight on. Would it really be so much more expensive for factory owners to furnish their employees with alarm clocks?

Strolling about Rostov next morning before the hour when Intourist begins to amuse its wards, I found people pouring into a building like ants returning to their ant-heap. I went upstairs with them and found the crowd hawking their winter coats, samovars, fur caps, heavy old boots, anything they could possibly spare. Each must show his "document" or Soviet passport first in this government pawnshop. Most of them grumbled at the appraisals, but had to accept the government appraiser's figure willy-nilly, got a ragged ticket when they had, exchanged that for a surprising number of paper rubles at the cashier's window when it finally saw fit to open.

A little boy of three was being crushed in the crowd as his long-pregnant mother fought her way to the little window with some temporarily superfluous rag. There is no common decency toward women in a Russian crowd; that has been liquidated. So I picked up the

child, to the great surprise of the gathering, bringing a kidnaping look into the mother's eyes, and stood him up on a window barrier where he could see Mother. But still he was not entirely mollified, in spite of the hunk of black bread he was chewing.

Rostov seemed at first glance to be much better off than Moscow. Those who had come down the Volga said Kazan was much worse, really heart-sickening in its misery. Some said they enjoyed the Volga; others that it stank so that even on the steamer it was almost unbearable, that there were bedbugs and cockroaches, that the five-day trip grew very monotonous, and that life in the villages along the way was so miserable that it made them "wery unheppy." Rostov's central Park of Culture and Rest, almost opposite the hotel, was magnificent, flowers innumerable in quantity and variety, beautifully tended, in borders, designs, beds of all shapes and sizes, landscape gardening which "capitalism" rarely surpasses. The people, at least the "rest day" throngs in the principal streets, seemed better dressed and better laundered than in Moscow, perhaps because clothing is lighter in weight and color that much farther south, and a little more contented with life. There were lots of big new buildings, especially in the outskirts; an extensive new hospital, in which we got a glimpse of what looked like a perfectly up-to-date operation through an upper window. But a builder-tourist who chanced to be in the same car that day pointed out the miserable brickwork in the huge unfinished Soviet headquarters and said it was typical of Soviet building everywhere.

That Sunday in Rostov was a working day, but Mon-



day was a Soviet Sunday. The Intourist director, a Harvard graduate, suggested that I spend it on a trip to the State Farm, but vetoed his own suggestion by mentioning that it would cost me five "gold" rubles. Why should I pay them to show me the very sights they want us to see? I already knew they work their women like cattle, and it is bad enough to live on a farm at home, without having to visit a lot of them on your travels. Besides, victims of the day before reported it a terrible six-to-seven-hour ride out there and back. Horsefeathers! The big open market behind the cathedral offered me far more of interest, and when that palled I walked far out beyond the soldiers standing bayonet guard over baled hay in the outskirts and found a great crowd waiting patiently for something or other. It turned out to be motor road races, trucks with Diesel engines, apparently. Queer what can interest the mob. I stood around for a couple of hours in the dust, on cobblestones and dirty bare ground, and still nothing happened. So I wandered back to the street-car terminus and let a very pretty blond motor "man" drive me back to the hotel.

In 1933 two hundred and forty-eight farmers near Rostov-on-Don put their one-half to three and a half hectares of land each together, "voluntarily," according to their "president." Perhaps it really was voluntary, for it looks as if pooling tools and labor makes farming less arduous. Each kept a small garden for himself. A worker at the railway station, living in their midst, has only a garden, which is not a part of the farm. The Government gave more land, until now

they have 1967 hectares (a hectare, as you ought to know by this time, is about two and a half acres) of which 891 are under cultivation. Horses, oxen, tools were turned into the common fund; each kept his own cows—two per family, two per person, all they had when they were communized . . . we could not get our informants to agree on that point—their goats, pigs, chickens. Other people assured us that if a man has a cow he must sell to the Government at ten kopeks a litre part of the milk it gives (the Government sells it at 2.50 rubles a litre) and must still deliver his quota of milk to the Government after the cow has gone dry, or else the cow will be confiscated.

The "president," his head more recently shaved than his face, came in with a GPU briefcase hanging from a shoulder, a young, orderly, efficient, enthusiastic man, who does not lose steam by just blowing it off. He is elected, so he has to be a hand-shaker, even as politicians in capitalistic countries. The farm, he said, must sell to the Government one-third of the crop at the Government's price, which of course is well below the market price. The money paid for this covers the rent of the machinery. Some years, if there is a drought or some other farmer's calamity, nothing goes to the Government except a petition or an explanation. Individual farmers, he said, pay ten per cent more to the Government than collectives do.

The produce left is divided among the members according to the number of work-day units credited to each worker. This unit is fixed by the State, but is modified in each case by the collective-farm membership to fit local conditions. One man did 450 worker's-day

units during a year, often with no work in the winter-time at that. Of course he was a *udarnik*, a shock worker. I had no means of finding out how their worker's-day unit compares to a day's work in the United States. My guess is that it is considerably less. The average for the 401 workers was twelve to fifteen units in a six-day (five working days) week. The farm's own share totaled about a million rubles; and about sixty per cent of that—that is, 600,000 rubles' worth of crops—was divided among the workers. Last year's average for the workers was 6.15 rubles per worker's-day unit. Some sold their share of the crop in the "open" market, where they have to pay a fee for a stand. But some of them needed all of it to feed their families, as I would.

The collective-farmer house we chose at random was clean, roughly built, in 1914, by the same family that now inhabited it, was almost over-furnished, and had ikons in every room we saw. About it were masses of beautiful flowers. The farm *crèche* needed screens, for the flies were bad. Otherwise the small children in it looked healthy and well-provided, in the unimmaculate peasant style. The *crèche* takes them when they are three months old; according to our informants they go home to their families at night. But one got the feeling that while the nurses gave them earnest institutional care they might now and then let slip through their fingers a tiny life which a loving mother might have saved. The impression may be wrong; for your Russian peasant woman is not noted for delicacy or nicety in the care of children. She fits better, even in physique and manners, the upper end of a hoe.

The Bulgarian boss of a hundred and seventy plump girls in their 'teens working among the vegetables on the farm said they were all sixteen or over, but some of them certainly did not look fourteen. They were eating at a long, rough table in a shed; no meat, coarse but wholesome food, fairly plentiful—I know some girls in the United States whom some of this life every year, instead of summer-resorting only, would do a lot of good. There were big red banners the whole length of the dining-shed wall, covered with big white letters singing the alleged virtues of Communism: "The USSR is the only country in the world that has collective farms." "In the USSR the land belongs to those who work on it." Maybe . . . Well, anyway, the "president" and the boss told us each to take our choice of the tomatoes the girls had been picking that morning, and I never got so good a one on a "special" category food ticket as the one I picked out. How they fixed their bookkeeping with Moscow to cover up our ravages I do not know.

A few miles away women and children as well as men were threshing. The men hauled unthreshed rye from a dozen closely placed stacks to the machine, dragging it behind oxen and horses. The women who fed it to the machine had their faces wrapped up like Mohammedan women, as a protection against dust and chaff. A motor ran the threshing-machine; women turned the fanning-mill, just as I did in my boyhood. Other men and boys hauled the threshed straw away with teams of horses and oxen to huge straw piles a hundred yards long, the hauling ropes thrown clear over the tops of them.

The women and girls on a State Farm had even more the aspect of a half-prisoner army. But the common sense of not letting valuable farm machinery lie idle, probably outdoors, 360 days a year, and a sure market for all they can raise, even if at low prices, offsets some of the feeling of resentment aroused by the turning of women and girls into oxen.

Funerals, they tell me, were often pathetic sights in tzarist Russia; they certainly are the most pathetic sights the average visitor will see in the Soviet Union. You will not be there long without seeing one, though you may not recognize it at once for what it is. Two old women walking behind two old men with a box. A truck thundering over the cobbles, the coffin in it bouncing, to say nothing of the corpse, a dozen badly dressed people walking behind, is a sign of something akin to affluence in the deceased. A young man and his wife just taking a dead baby out to bury it, or to have it burned—cremation costs a few cents. The Soviet authorities believe with me that a few ashes waste less ground than a full-length corpse. He was carrying the little yellow coffin by a white sling over one shoulder and chatting with the woman at his side as if they were out for a morning stroll, tramping along the already hot cobbles. Two boys and two girls, the oldest about thirteen, carrying their mother two miles to bury her; no one else present. Wife and sister pulling a corpse toward the cemetery in a kind of home-made child's express wagon; in winter they would use a hand-sled. I take it that undertakers were liquidated, along

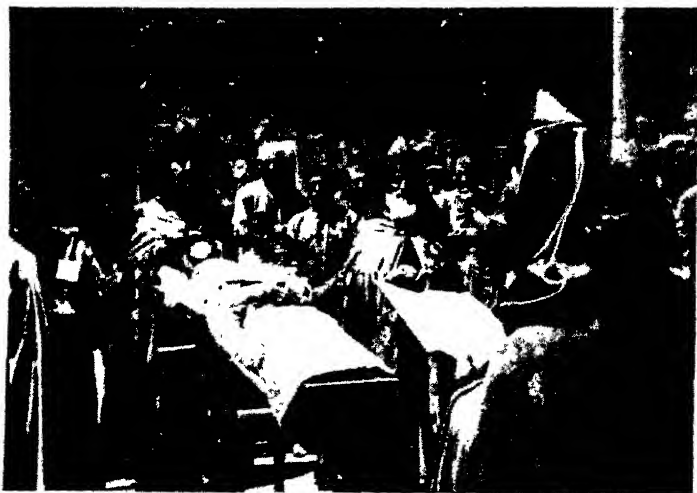


### SOVIET POSTER PROPAGANDA

- (1) "Shame on Drunkards?" (2) "Products of Collective Farms Should Be Sold at Factories." (3) "Crops Should Be Attended to on Time." (4) "Peasants and Members of Young Communists League, to the Tractors! Join the Shock Workers for the Spring Sowing!" (5) "Let Us Increase Production of Vegetables!" (6) "Let Us Increase the Sale of Collective Farms' Products!" (7) "Don't Waste Time During Working Hours!"



A Child Is Dead—and Buried



During His Last Long Rites an Armenian Priest Carries What Looked Like a Letter of Introduction to the Dictator of the Next World.

with the other intelligentsia. Many cemeteries were leveled and the stones used for building. If the monument suggested that the deceased was well-to-do, the Government digs for treasure. They say religious funerals take place before noon and others after—or is it vice versa? Whichever it is, there is very little other difference between the vast majority of them. On the other hand, if a member of the Communist Party dies, they have bands and orations an' everything—except of course prayers and sermons.

The most pathetic I saw of those most pathetic sights in the Soviet Union was a funeral procession in the outskirts of Rostov-on-Don. It consisted of eight children and three women, all of them ragged and soiled, tramping barefoot through the dust under a blazing sun. Four boys carried the deceased by two whitish cloths passing under the coffin and over their shoulders. The pall-bearers laughed and joked and quarreled, accused one another of not carrying their share, spat now and then into the hot dust. One boy walked ahead, carrying the top of the coffin on his bare and shaggy pate. Like the coffin, the top was made of such boards as comprise an orange-box and lined with coarse wrapping paper of flimsy quality. A nail protruded from each corner of it.

Just after the procession passed we got out of our Lincoln to see some detail of collective-farm living and several of us eluded the guide and followed it. The corpse was a child of two or three, dressed in heavy brown stockings to the hips, the rest wrapped in a kind of cheesecloth. Its head rolled back and forth as the



boys stumbled along—but remember, the corpse has always been exposed during a Russian funeral procession. There was a red cross in paper pasted on the coffin top, an ikon on the baby's breast. Its unwashed mouth was streaked with brown stains.

On and on the straggling cortège plodded, left the semblance of a road at last and wormed its way through tall weeds and human excrement to a newly dug hole in a long-untended cemetery. Beside the shallow grave the women rearranged the hands and the whitish cheesecloth. The two old women who had carried the shovels were, it seemed, the grandmothers. The young woman in faded calico that had once been gay was the mother, who now kissed the corpse, wept a little. Then all the others kissed it, and the ikon too, then took that out and laid it aside. A boy carrying a hatchet without a handle helped the mother nail down the coffin top, bending every nail or driving it out the side of the flimsy boards. The mother stepped down into the less than waist-deep grave, took the coffin in her arms, set it down, extricated her bare feet with difficulty. Then at a simultaneous croak from the grandmothers she lifted it out again, turned it around. Perhaps there is some custom or superstition as to which point of the compass the head faces; or it may merely have been that the grave bottom seemed uneven to the old women. All the party threw earth on the coffin, the boys with their hands, the old women one shovelful each. Then they handed the shovels to the ragged boys, who began quarreling over them and pushing the pile of earth into the grave as if it were some unusually amusing game.

I am not religious. I more or less agree with the Bolsheviks that religion sometimes is an opiate. But I like to see a human being laid away with a little more ceremony than burying a cat.

## CHAPTER XI

### SOVIET SCENES

*A People's Court . . . The Line-up . . . How About Religion? . . . Since Pogrom Days . . . There's the Negro, Too . . . No Unemployment? . . . It's Getting Better . . . He Tore Up His Passport*

*Scene:* A dingy and not very large room in a government building, more likely than not a dilapidated and inconvenient building left behind by the old régime.

*Place:* Any city or large town in the European part of the Soviet Union, in many villages, factories, collective or State farms; in fact, almost anywhere in the USSR.

Three men sit on the wall side of a table covered with a once bright-red cloth that needs washing. So do the three men—who are just as likely to be women. So do the lawyers on a hard bench along the side wall. So, above all, does the patched and disheveled crowd on the six hard benches for spectators—no, seven; there's another along the side wall.

The benches are packed tight with unsoaped and worse than poorly dressed people, the sexes about even. They seem to have no particular business here. Nowhere else to go, I suppose, for seats and entertainment. The atmosphere is so thick with their presence that only the hardy explorer would endure it long for mere information or curiosity's sake.

There is a woman holding a soiled and anemic baby, corked up with the inevitable pacifier. Even without that aid to adenoids the infant would probably not interrupt the proceedings. It doesn't look as if it had the energy to cry. Besides, babies realize that the individual is nothing in the USSR. Two other very young children dot the audience, both solemn and plump, rosy with health, and about as dirty as a child can be and survive.

The lawyers on the side bench are all in their shirt-sleeves, short or rolled sleeves and collarless shirts cut or tucked in V-shape. Here and there is a smock, usually far from washday, embroidered with flowers or some other recurring pattern. It falls almost to the knees and is constricted at the waist by a very narrow leather belt. Come to gaze around, every man in the courtroom is coatless, as men should be during such weather, and open necks, even to the extent of leaving a hairy chest boastfully displayed, doesn't excite the court in the least, irrespective of its sex.

Let's go find a woman judge, anyway. There is almost sure to be one in some courtroom in the building. Yes, here we are; an exact replica of the room we just left, odor and all. *Смеюм!*—which is Russian, alphabetically at least, for "Smell 'em!" The judge or "chairman" in the middle looks like a washerwoman who has been hastily called away from her tub to try to arbitrate a dispute among her neighbors. She is as badly in need of soap as the plaintiff, or for that matter even the defendant. There is not a sign of refinement about her, but there is plenty of the washerwoman shrewdness of long and hard experience. Don't forget

that Catherine the Great started out as a washer-woman, which is probably what made her great.

This time one of the two "counselors" flanking her happens also to be a woman. The only requirement is that they be "workers," which in Sovietland phraseology means one who earns his livelihood by manual labor. She looks like—well, say a timid old-maid seamstress who has been hastily brought in on the spur of the moment and still hasn't recovered from the shock the summons gave her. On the other side of the judge is the only man at the table. He has the face and manner of a village grocer who has suddenly been elevated to a conspicuous place of responsibility that makes him feel uncomfortably as if he were rubbing elbows with Comradè Stalin himself. His expression is that of a country boy beholding for the first time the wonders of the State Fair and determined to bring the old folks at home a full and strictly truthful account of them.

The accused leans on the red tablecloth. It seems she stole the plaintiff's husband. Well, there's no accounting for tastes. Or perhaps this uncouth peasant woman comes more nearly supporting him in the style to which he is accustomed than did the more nearly civilized wife. The wife carries, first on one arm then on the other, a fat boy of two or more. Surely he could stand beside her. But no doubt he adds to her appeal for sympathy. He squirms and gazes while she leans her hips against the table and testifies. The field-woman defendant standing beside her butts in every other moment and denies her testimony. When the judge raps on the table with whatever she had in

her hand when she was called to court and tells her to be quiet she goes on making faces and gestures of disapproval of the plaintiff's statements.

A People's Court in the Soviet Union is informality personified, as informal as a quarrel among children. There is of course no oath. How could there be under a régime that prides itself on its atheism? The nearest thing to it is an "and remember, if you tell any lies you'll go to prison" from the judge, when she tells the other witnesses in the next case to go outside while the first of them testifies. There is no cross-examination, not even direct examination, except when the judge throws in a question for her own information. There are no "exceptions," no undotted "i" or uncrossed "t" in the indictment to cause a mistrial. The judge and her counselors are obviously intent on only one question: Did the defendant commit the illegal act charged by the plaintiff? It seems an amusingly narrow view to take of a case, if you have ever been in an American courtroom.

The witnesses lean on the table and tell their garlic-scented stories in the judge's face. They shout and almost argue with the judge, with one another. When they get through they just walk away. There is no dismissal, no "that's all" from lawyers or judge, nothing. The defendant's lawyer, if any, can only sit and hear what the witnesses say when they step up and tell their tales. He may of course have given them some advice or instructions beforehand. He can "sum up" and "call the court's attention" to this or that which may tend to mitigate or disprove the alleged guilt of

his client; and he often does so, voluminously. In one case I attended, the woman lawyer for the manager of a government bakery accused of letting some one get away with several tons of flour called attention to the fact that he was a Greek and therefore did not always understand the Russian that was being spoken about him; that the head bookkeeper had taken a dislike to him and would have been only too glad to lose the tons of flour in the intricacies of his ledger; that . . . When hunger for food and fresh air drove us outside she had at least twice as many typewritten pages left with which to call the court's attention to other points.

At the end of a case the judge and his counselors go into a back room, usually return in ten or fifteen minutes. While they are gone, the lawyers munch "black" bread. Some nibble even while the court is sitting. No one stands up to do the court honor when it leaves or returns. There is none of that air of sanctity, of fear, common to courtroom scenes in capitalistic countries. Even the accused addresses the judge as "Tovarish," and treats him as if he were in truth a comrade. "Your Honor" or "Your Worship" would sound worse than incongruous in a Soviet Court. A decision in a word or a gesture settles the matter, at least as far as that court is concerned. The unsatisfied plaintiff or defendant merely walks out, muttering to himself. I suppose there must be something corresponding to bail or other security to keep the accused from walking off entirely, but in all the People's Court cases I saw he seemed to be as free as the rest of us. Perhaps his "document" would soon betray him if he ran

away, or possibly that is sequestered during the trial, which would virtually tie him hand and foot.

The verdict in several cases I attended was "there must be a new trial, so we can gather more evidence." It may have meant that the judge and his counselors were weary or hungry or thirsting for tea and wanted to go home. It could not have meant a "hung" jury, for the judge can overrule both his counselors. But I have seen courts still functioning when darkness fell, the girl secretary, when the court boasts one, still taking down notes in longhand with a post-office pen by not as effective a light as she needed. How much of the testimony such a court stenographer gets down is more than I can tell you.

Why courts at all, with no divorce actions, no questions of inheritance, no private property worth mentioning? Well, for instance, there are many trials of directors of government bureaus, of managers of government factories for not doing their jobs efficiently, trials for offenses which, perhaps wrongly, we do not regard as offenses at all. Certainly if the visible evidence is trustworthy there is no dearth of work for the People's Courts.

The Soviet Union purports to be more interested in rehabilitation than in punishment. People not very favorably inclined toward the Red point of view admit that there is considerable rehabilitation. Ten years is the limit for any crime against an individual, and if you are in for five or ten years and behave yourself you are let off in the spring and summer for a few months to go home and help with the plowing and the harvest. Five years is usually the maximum punishment for mur-



der, and that may be reduced by years for good behavior. But murder of a member of the Communist party is likely to mean a trial for anti-revolutionary activities, and then conviction usually leads to the firing squad. For a crime against the State, such as neglect of duty or stealing state property—and almost any property is apt to be state property—you may get a life, or even a death, sentence. In fact, the law of August 7, 1933, permits the application of the death penalty for any theft of state property. But for a mere theft from an individual the thief may merely lose his wages, or a large percentage of them, for a few weeks, though he must go on working. The punishment for rape is more severe than for murder, as it should be. To be convicted as a "hooligan"—the word is in common use in Russia—is to run the risk of spending five or ten years in a labor camp.

The judge lights one of those long tube-mounted Russian cigarettes and settles down on her elbows to listen. Obviously she is intent on doing full and honest—and perhaps rather grim—justice. The grocer-faced counselor takes on still more of the appearance of a boy who for the first time in his life has a very serious matter to decide and is deathly afraid of making a mistake. The old-maid seamstress, if that is her state and calling, conquers her desire to fidget and gazes intently at the witnesses.

The judges in Sovietland's People's Courts rely on intuition rather than on learning or precedents. There are no precedents in the USSR, anyway. Perhaps these informal courts are worse than our juries. In fact, I am not at all sure I wouldn't rather take my

chances, at least if I were innocent, of getting justice in such a court than amid all the formalities, technicalities, and mammoth lawyers' fees in our courts. Looking at it from the perspective of the Russian scene, I wonder if our court procedure has not grown so ornate and complicated beyond all reason, all common sense, until it defeats rather than aids justice, that only a revolution, completely smashing it, can cure it.

If the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics ever decides that its present name is too long and cumbersome, it might be called Queueland. Certainly it is the land of queues, of standing in line. Its indiscriminating friends remind us that we have bread-lines in the United States too. But we have none at all compared with the USSR, and at least those in them don't have to pay for the bread when they reach the head of the line.

The subjects of the sickle-and-hammer stand in line on the first day of each month to get their bread-cards; they stand in line every day thereafter to get their bread. The dead must give up their bread-cards before they can be buried. Peasants come to town and stand in line to buy bread, even in the fertile Ukraine, because all their grain has been taken away from them. Children sent to get the family's daily bread are so famished by the time they reach the head of the line that they make ghastly inroads into the supply on their way home. It seems rather a pity that Intourist deprives its "guests" of the national experience of standing in line for their bread.

If it were only bread, the task might be salted with

a sprinkling of good humor and let it go at that. But standing in line is the principal national occupation. There are queues for every possible thing for which a queue could possibly be organized. One stands in line for hours to get permission to visit a friend in the city, for days perhaps to get a train ticket there, often for weeks to find room on the train. One queues up before a bathhouse, finally gets a slip with a number on it, and goes home to sleep or to wait a few days until that number's turn comes. In some cities the line-up has been adopted for street-car patrons, instead of the bee-swarming free-for-all that still reigns in Leningrad and Moscow. People begin to line up at two in the morning before a store opening (or announcing that it will open) with a stock of tomatoes, of cabbage, of something else that makes mouths water, at 8:30. So used to queues, so accustomed are the beneficiaries of Lenin to fight for places like savages on a sinking ship that they will crowd tight against you even if there are yards of open space right behind them and no one else waiting to be served.

Let us hasten to be fair, however, and remind you that this endless queueing up is not entirely the fault of Communism. One reason for queues everywhere is lack of efficiency and too much red tape behind the wicket—with its tiny, navel-high window—and those are faults of the Russian temperament and generations, probably centuries, of training. Unless he saw a queue waiting to be served, any Russian would know that the particular business in hand was a failure. He is queue-minded, irrespective of his political beliefs.

The red tape of making a ten-cent purchase is be-

yond American belief. It has always been the Russian way to make the simple things of life as long and involved and difficult as possible, and if people were not made to queue up on every pretext they would feel that something had gone wrong somewhere. One must join four to six queues to buy the simplest, most insignificant thing, even in the sumptuous Torgsin stores. I remember the first crowded store I dropped into in Lenin-grad, on what I then felt was rather a courageous stroll by myself through a district even more down at heel than the rest of the city. The scent of the Great Unwashed was almost overpowering. Two lines were paying rubles for tickets from cash-registers, as we do at some soda fountains. Then those with tickets lined up at the other end of the shop and finally got—blueberries wrapped in newspapers that were soon soaked through and disintegrating, in this particular case. In the better stores, at least those that demand real money, they now have some paper bags and blotting-paper-like wrapping paper.

I puzzled for a while to know the significance of two other queues. Before I left Russia I knew them only too well; they are made up of those who have most recently come in and are now memorizing the price of what they hope to buy, in order to know how much cash-register ticket to purchase. If you want to buy a package of cigarettes you find first a shop that has them for sale, which is in itself an explorer's job. Then you join a queue there and work your way up to see if there are any cigarettes left, and if so, what they are selling for. The next queue brings you sooner or later to the KACCA, which in Roman letters would

be Kassa, and in France would be Caisse. The Kassa, by the way, is just as important and omnipresent a thing in Soviet life as in any capitalistic country; in fact, I can't recall one in which there is a Kassa even at the entrance to every public park. In other words you pay for the cigarettes you hope before long to buy. The line before the cigarette counter may scatter before you until you are the head of it yourself, waving your ticket triumphantly—but by that time the stock of cigarettes may be sold out.

Oh, well, at least the air and the newspapers and the scenery of the USSR are not filled with voices and signs and type shrieking the virtues of rival brands of cigarettes, and instead of a steady propaganda to get both sexes and all ages to smoking them as early and often as possible, the Soviet authorities are almost contented to have them scarce, or at least consider them less important in their plans of production than tractors or electric-light bulbs. Queer lot of people! But, anyway, if you are an average American you will be only slightly less disappointed if you do get your cigarettes, for in the USSR they are long hollow tubes filled at the extreme ends with some membrane-destroying form of dried vegetation to which somehow a faint aroma of the tobacco plant has been added. But the big, elaborate cigarette boxes make nice souvenirs for your children.

One man exchanged an empty vodka bottle for a package of Sovietland's cheapest cigarettes when he reached the head of his particular line in that first Leningrad store. A Jewish youth fought his way to the top of the cash-register queue, was pushed back

by several women, admonished by several men, but finally got his purchases far ahead of his turn. Persistence is one of the prime virtues, even under Communism. No one officially insists on a man keeping his place in the line, as far as I saw the USSR. Each queue is a self-regulating mob, with no police supervision. In Torgsin stores and some other *valuta*-only establishments, the actual parting with money comes at the end rather than in the beginning. But in either case it is a fixed rule that only the cashier may take money, and she usually has a guard beside her cage to see that she does not run away with it.

"Russia is a very happy country, the most happy country in the world," an ex-American technical expert assured me. "If we get a pound of sugar we are happy for two days; if a pound of butter, for a week; if a suit of clothes, for a month; and if a real miracle happens and we get a new pair of shoes we are happy for a whole year."

I went to church every Sunday in the Soviet Union, which is far more than I do at home. Each time I suddenly remembered that the day was Sunday and hurried off to the nearest or most famous, or at least most imposing, cathedral or other place of worship. If there is a red cross displayed on a church it means that it is still functioning, with perhaps as many worshippers as on a fine Sunday in the "good old days." I saw even young people in church, going about kissing ikons and dropping kopeks in the box. But forty—mostly ragged, dirty, and decrepit older people—was about the average congregation, a priest or two inton-

ing—unless those chanters in workman's garb were laymen. They tell me that something good must be said of Soviet matters during each service, but "that is better than no church at all." All former religious edifices now belong to the State, of course; the congregation must pay a rental fee to use it. Priests who persist in priesting must pay high taxes on any income it brings them, and they are disfranchised, along with former capitalists, aristocracy, members of the tzarist secret police, and other outstanding "enemies of the people." In fact, their children cannot go beyond the sixth grade; they can't get into the army, the universities, rest camps, good jobs, and are denied many other advantages of workers' children—talk about visiting the sins of the fathers . . . !

It is of course no news to any one that one must profess atheism in order to join the Communist Party; that it is illegal to give religious instruction to any one under eighteen years of age; that the League of Militant Atheists, with more than four million members, carries on, with the help of the Government, a "Godless" campaign in which its most recent move was to call upon the teachers of the USSR to "root out the last survivals of religious instinct." The great majority of priests and monks have treated themselves to a shave and a haircut and turned workmen, some of them now being *udarniki* and in the highest good standing in labor ranks. A foreign resident in Moscow has an ex-nun as a housekeeper; even ex-nuns must live. Former ikon painters now make miniatures and lacquer boxes for tourists—through the Government, of course. It would be silly to hazard a guess as to how



A Rainy-Day Bread-Line in the Caucasus.



Here Beside the Black Sea a Gay Calico Dress Will Cost You \$18.70  
or Forty Cents, Depending on Where You Buy Your Rubles.





Certain Mountaineer Tribesmen Wear a Panama-Like Felt Hat, But the Various Forms of Caps Worn in the Caucasus Seem to the Outsider Burdensome on a Hot Day, in Spite of the Shaved Heads Under Them.

irreligious Russia or the whole population of the Soviet Union has become. But there are concrete evidences that many older people still believe and that among the younger generation religion is pretty well dead, ridiculed for the most part out of existence. Jews, I heard, still circumcise their boys in secret. One Jewish member of the Party openly announced that he would do so, whatever the consequences, and he had so far not been disciplined. But young men and women seem, in the great majority of cases, irrespective of race or the faith of their parents, to be convinced that whatever heaven there is, is in this world, not the next, and act accordingly.

I am not exactly the one to defend the disfranchised priests. In tzarist Russia priests did bless exploitation, joined with the nobility in keeping the masses poor and ignorant to the benefit of the upper stratum, kept people humble under their wrongs. They overdid the monetary side of their vantage place; wouldn't marry or bury or baptize unless and until they were paid in advance; taught the poor peasant that unless he consulted the priests about all his crops and had his fields blessed, at a price, several times a year, nothing would grow for him. I will not go so far as to say that things were as bad as in India, but religion was certainly more or less of an opiate to the Russian masses.

Ridicule was the Soviet's main weapon against the priests, who had laid themselves wide open to it. Out of innumerable examples of it let me mention only one. In the crypts of an ancient monastery in Kiev some-

thing about the air or the soil preserved corpses beyond the ordinary and turned them into desiccated mummies, just as in Guanajuato in Mexico, in Dublin, Palermo, and numerous other places. Those that survived death best were placed in costly sarcophagi, wearing expensive robes and priceless jewelry, were credited with sainthood and supernatural powers, and brought the monks a nice steady little stipend from the credulous. Did the triumphant Leninites just throw the saint into a grave and cover him up, as ordinary common sense would have dictated? Not at all. They put him carefully in a nice glass case, with placards and all the consideration and publicity he could possibly expect—and across from him they put a crocodile in another glass case, a crocodile whose corpse had been equally well preserved in this crypt, with a placard, "Is this one holy too?"

Yes, they are rather good, or at least very effective, in the use of ridicule. Take that statue of a pompous fat man on a fatter bronze horse in front of the Lenin-grad station. Instead of tearing it down until they have time and occasion to put something else up in its place they have simply carved in the granite pedestal the word PUGALO (Scarecrow).

The priests and monks had the Russian masses, especially the peasants, who made up the great bulk of them, so imbued with the conviction that the better a "saint's" body was preserved the more saintly he was in life and the more miraculous in doing good after death that there is no need to ask why Lenin is kept on view from four to six every afternoon, except when he is "under reparations."

Posters and graphs in former cathedrals and monasteries that are now anti-religious museums show graphically how much the priest got out of the people in the old days, and how. Men with their hats or caps on, some of them, and sometimes a woman, smoking, wander through these ex-churches. A ragged workman in a cap and an open-necked, soiled shirt stands in the holy of holies, never visible to the worshipers in other days except at Easter time, of what was once Leningrad's finest cathedral, lecturing on the horrors of religion to open-mouthed peasants, gaping workmen, round-eyed boys and girls. The walls are covered with all manner of anti-religious displays, some of them ingenious, all of them with a basis of fact.

"Anti-superstition, not anti-religion," murmurs a pious tourist. Yeah, but they ridicule God as well as desiccated saints, ridicule him in the theaters as well as in the anti-religious museums. Believers can hardly laugh that off, much as they abhor superstitions. "They have not persecuted religion; they have started the work of ridding the country of theological machines, but religion will stay and grow. . . ." Why, then, when the old man in a play asks his prospective son-in-law's religion and he booms, "I am an Atheist!" does the audience applaud vociferously?

In Tiflis a dozen sorry-looking old people emphasized the emptiness of a church during a mid-week Georgian service. Magnificent singing came from a hidden corner. We strolled around to it. That marvelous bass issued from the throat of a thin, anemic-looking man; the bearded giant beside him was singing tenor. But what had once been an impressive cere-

mony was now only a kind of cheap sideshow. Religion has its share of bunk, but even I feel sorry to lose the solemnity, the ceremony, the peaceful (outwardly at least) atmosphere of those medieval pageants of which this was only the most decrepit of survivals.

A year or two, as I have said, make the visitor to Sovietland no longer up-to-date in his information. Even as I write, the cable reports that clergymen and church officials have been restored to full citizenship, coincident with the beginning of an intensive propaganda campaign against all religions, to be financed with government funds. The days are gone when hoodlums attacked even foreign women entering a church, perpetrating indecencies, leaving the marks of their foul hands on their thighs, their most intimate garments in tatters. The self-confidence of Soviet authorities that they have religion on the run prompts of course the restoration to civil rights and equality to the clergy they once feared. But are they too self-confident? Probably not, if they can hold their power until only the young people of to-day are left.

As far as the Old World is concerned, the USSR rather than Palestine is now the Jew's Garden of Eden. The supreme council back of the Revolution of 1917 consisted of five Jews and three Gentiles. To-day the proportions are reversed—but they say Litvinoff is due for membership in the highest assembly soon, that "they are still trying him out." It would have been astonishing if under these circumstances the Jew had not come into his own in the USSR.

"They couldn't kill us off with pogroms, so now Jews are being eradicated with kindness," complained, or boasted, a Russian-born American tourist. "Jew and Gentile intermarry and the children are no longer Jews." A Jew himself can hardly tell who is a Jew to-day, in a land where until 1917 it was written all over him, by requirement and his own choice, as if he carried the information on a sandwich board. Jew after Jew assured us that there is no discrimination whatsoever against them in any line or any circle—"except in thoughts," added one Jewish engineer. It is running the risk of spending six months in a prison camp to use the Russian equivalent of "kike" or "sheeney." Men have been permanently placed on the blacklist for repeating that offense. "But they still say it up their sleeves," another educated Jew told us.

Jews are not all agreed, apparently, that Russia is the paradise of the Jews to-day, if only because they do not want their race wiped out by way of the marriage bureau. Another of them, who seemed to know whereof he spoke, denied that they are in any danger of eradication by intermarriage, insisting that in the USSR as a whole not one per cent of Jews marry Gentiles, and that those marriages usually break up. So, as with so many things in Sovietland, there is no unquestionable information, at least for the casual inquirer, but widely variegated guesses, all more or less colored by individual prejudices. I merely bring the matter up as something to think about, perhaps to look into if your time and interest and opportunities to peruse the official records are more than mine.

Many Jews will have you believe that the new

régime wanted the Jew to remain as a race because it needs his quick-thinking and other racial abilities. Hence, they say, the Jewish colony in Siberia, the Autonomous Province of Biro-Bidjan, just north of Manchukuo, big as Holland and Belgium combined, the only all-Jewish government in the world. Siberia has lots of room for Jews, but only a very small number of Jews go there. At last count Biro-Bidjan had only 14,000 Jews, as against 30,000 Russians, Koreans, Chinese, though the Government pays the cost, averaging \$150 each, of bringing them from Central Europe. The average Jew is not pioneer-minded. Palestine has no room for them. "Why lie to ourselves? The Arabs already own it. Besides, few of us want to go there, either." The result is that the Jew remains to compete with the Gentiles, and competition in the USSR means for government jobs.

The Hitler strain in Europe, I have already mentioned, insists that Communism or Bolshevism is merely a world-wide Jewish conspiracy to rule the world, to assign all Gentiles to the second table. They cite the fact that Moscow gives them free land and has absolved that Jewish province in eastern Siberia of crop-taxes for the next five or ten years as one of thousands of special favors to the Jews. They point out the obvious fact that Jews hold much more than their numerical proportion of jobs, and the higher jobs, under the Soviet régime.

Personally, I think they are seein' things at night. The Jew is bound to bob to the surface wherever he enjoys anything like free play—Scotland, Armenia, Malta, and a few other queer corners of the earth

perhaps excepted. He thrives in proportion to the naïveté and the good nature, the slow-wits and the lack of "push" of the people among whom he is sprinkled. His mind works rather faster than most people's; he thinks two or three times to the Russian's once; he is more adaptable, quicker to make the best of a new situation, Johnny-on-the-spot and persistent in staying there; so naturally when given an even start he beats most of his fellow-Communists to the big jobs, particularly those which have anything about them resembling buying and selling. I could name you off-hand a dozen clever schemes in Soviet activities that could only have been thought out by a Jew, or possibly an Armenian. In fact, you can find him without an effort at or near the apex of a lot of departments of Government in the USSR. I'll wager that many of the bright ideas that emphasize the adaptability of the Stalin régime come from those three Jews in the high council. Stalin is a doer, not a thinker, still less a dreamer.

But to accuse the Jew of conspiring to rule the world politically, beyond the natural scope of his financial mastery, is to deny him most of the intelligence and shrewdness we all grant him. For he knows that beyond a certain point in his acquisitiveness there comes an economical dead-line beyond which lie new restrictions and perhaps new pogroms.

One of the contentions of the Soviet régime is that there is no distinction of race, color, or previous condition of servitude—except of course for former "exploiters" and their offspring. To be sure, we say so,



too; but, by Jove, they intend to live up to it or bust. So a cultured Jewess born in the United States and turned Communist, who has come to live in Moscow, announces her marriage to a big buck nigger (I use the term advisedly, for I have seen him). Is it showing off or satisfying a formerly forbidden longing? A Russian woman announced to a friend of mine that she had a "very distinguished guest" coming to dinner, and was busy all day making pies, spending all her available money in Torgsin. The guest proved to be a negro actress, who not only did not come, but never sent an apology, an explanation, or any other word, to the deep grief, instead of at least the indifference, of the slighted hostess.

I met a peevish American negro on the bus-ride from Yalta to Sevastopol, who had worked two years in a ball-bearing factory in Moscow, and was on the way back from a month's vacation in the Crimea, paid for by his fellow-workers. He was haughty to the point of being supercilious, like most American negroes toward Americans, after being treated as equals—or better—by Europeans. Racial equality is all very well; but one likes it to be mutual.

It is a complete waste of breath to discuss lynchings with the Russians, with most continental Europeans. They haven't any color-line, nor the vaguest conception of our feeling on the subject. I am not saying that our point of view is justified, much less condoning lynch law. I am merely emphasizing the uselessness of trying to explain it when a lynching is headlined in the newspapers of the USSR as a characteristic of wicked "capitalistic society."

They say. . . . Who says? Why, just almost every one, the guides and the authorities and the "news" papers . . . I must have heard the statement a thousand times during my month in the Soviet Union, repeated parrot-like by all the parlor pinks and accepted without thought or question by tourists of all shades of belief, that there is no unemployment in the USSR. Any discussion in which the question is a factor begins automatically with, "Of course there is no unemployment here, so . . ." But I never saw any proof of that general assumption. City streets are full of people at all hours of the day or night. Every form of transportation is perpetually crowded. Certainly you need not look far or long to see plenty of people anywhere who have all the outward symptoms of unemployment, and of long duration. But if you bring up any of these apparent evidences, your guide or other mentor will explain the full streets by saying that people have different rest days or work on other shifts, the stations full of stagnant passengers by the assertion that there are not nearly trains enough to accommodate the millions who get their month's vacation with expenses and full wages, and that, far from being cursed with the unemployment problem of wicked capitalistic countries, there is an acute labor shortage in the Soviet Union. I certainly was told more than once by those who should know and some of whom were not too favorable to the Stalin régime that any one can get work if he wants it, even if he is a foreigner; and I came in contact with several apparent proofs of that last statement.

If you are one of those bull-headed people who

simply will not believe a thing that looks unbelievable, your persistent and annoying questioning will eventually bring you up against a stone wall of silence or verbal sidestepping or a sudden complete loss of English. Once in a blue moon you may pump the casual admission from some older and more nearly educated (in the wide-world sense) guide that of course when they say there is work for every one they do not mean for the disfranchised classes, that perhaps there may be unemployment among those who are "not in order," but that "any one in the Soviet Union can get work—if their papers are o.k.," that there is a greater demand than supply of workers in some lines. Gradually you come to realize that when they speak of jobs for every one and any one, they are using "any one" in the sense of the old school laws in England or in our post-bellum South, or Society's "any one—worth knowing." How many of the 160,000,000 or so this form of computation leaves sitting on the doorsill of unemployment one can only guess. But the circumstantial evidence gathered by the eyes, ears, and nose is ample to convince any one but a Communist or a parlor pink that there are enough of them to make the habitual statement about unemployment distinctly untrue in the honest sense of the word.

Besides, if we were suddenly set back into the Middle Ages and determined to get back overnight industrially to where we are to-day we would have work for every one too. So could we have no unemployment if we should lose our efficiency and require five men (or three women and two men) to do one man's work. The trouble with us is that with our push and energy

and initiative and inventiveness we've just about worked ourselves out of a job. The Russians may be in some danger of doing that—some years hence—but nothing like as nearly as we have.

You can always reduce unemployment, too, by creating useless government jobs, increasing bureaucracy, and throwing away efficiency. If you go farther and make wages and hours so low that the women and children also have to take a job to keep the family fed, so that although a man gives all his energy to his work he cannot earn enough to feed his wife and keep his children at home, so that the wife also must work and the children be sent away to be brought up en masse. . . . Oh, well, of course psychiatrists tell us that the main trouble with most children is their parents, and I more or less agree. But . . . what's the use of arguing or even trying to explain when the words you must work with mean such totally different things to the two sides?

There was not an exception to the agreement that things were noticeably better in the USSR this year than last year. Ardent Bolsheviks and fiery anti-Communists, maudlin parlor pinks and their antitheses who had been there before, old foreign residents, the people themselves of all classes, all agreed that there was more and better food and clothing for sale, more stocks in the stores, lower prices or an improvement in the purchasing power of the ruble, a healthier look to every gathering than a year ago. Old-timers noticed that the proportion of suitcase to gunnysack passengers on trains and Black Sea steamers was higher.

Things were even better for tourists—that new restaurant, for instance, on the roof of the New Moscow Hotel in Moscow, instead of the cramped and dingy one on a lower floor of former years. Oranges from Batum—pretty poor oranges, to be sure, dry and small—but no longer do the natives accuse you with their boring eyes of being a wasteful capitalist if you suck an orange. It looked as if Bolshevism had turned the corner.

To the mere visitor the stores seemed almost well-stocked with many things, clothing included. But of course after hearing for years how unstocked they were, one's ideas of bare shelves were exaggerated, just as Niagara's actual roar is decreased by each story one hears of its roaring. On second look things were not so good; and they tell me they were better in 1928-9, that at least there were no bread-cards then. What can't be bought for love or money is little short of appalling. When I carelessly walked out in Erivan on the remnant of a faithful shaving-brush, I had to make one of a rope-end (how it tickled!) and use that until I got to—Hamburg, as a matter of fact, because I reached Warsaw on a Sunday and was too busy in Berlin to bother with such minor matters.

There were fewer signs of actual misery south of Moscow, though plenty of people with poor clothes or few of them, especially the children. Besides, this was summer, and when winter comes. . . . But things were not really so bad over there in any line, as far as I saw them, as I had been led to suppose. Of course, an untraveled American would see "terrible" things every other moment, not realizing that there are

dozens of other countries in the world, several in Europe itself, where the masses are as badly off or worse. One could find some minor, perhaps even some major, faults; and of course the standard of living is far, far below ours at its worst. But on the whole, whoever is running this show is doing remarkably well, given the handicaps under which he or they are working—which doesn't at all mean that there is much in it that we need copy.

Some visitors reported that they saw really cultured and nicely dressed people, that Sochi on the Black Sea was crowded with higher officials, outstanding actors, and others with special privileges, very well-dressed indeed, well-tailored and well-groomed men, rouged and befurred and beautifully gowned women with high-heeled shoes, much hand-kissing—another Russia, things you see nowhere else in the USSR, sights so incongruous that you had to pinch yourself to realize you were still in Sovietland. But I saw very few of those things, just a few fox furs and decent gowns on my last evening in Kiev and in the country. There always comes back to me in any summing up of conditions in the Soviet Union the opinion of a disillusioned young Russian born in the United States, yet almost uncanny in his fairness toward and inside information on the régime he had come to abhor. He felt that in spite of all its faults "things will be a lot better in five, ten, fifteen, perhaps fifty years. But there will always be the GPU. . . ."

He tore up his passport. He was one of those numerous Americans, Gentiles and Jews, who returned

or came to Russia after the revolution and in their first transports of enthusiasm over Communism destroyed their proofs of American citizenship—and are now bothering the self-satisfied young men of the American Consulate in Moscow in the hope of recovering them. This particular ex-American poohpoohed, by the way, the notion that minions of Moscow ever tore up an American passport.

I met him in—but I must not be too specific. He was born in our Middle West, from parents who had escaped from Siberia under the old régime; was graduated in engineering from an American university. Some years ago he had followed his parents back to the land of their birth, free now, they contended, from those things that had made them discontented in tzarist days. He earned nearly a thousand rubles a month, gross, as an engineer. They had three rooms with bath, shared a kitchen with two other families. He was well-dressed, for Sovietland, looked well-fed. But how he longed to be an American again! I have never met a man more fair-minded toward the régime he supported only under duress; but he was fed up. The brand new idea that he might be able to recover the citizenship he had thrown away put him in ecstasies.

“Of course, they won’t let me out, even if I get an American passport. An American passport is no exit visa. I know too much. I have strung along the GPU—and that means one out of every three of the population—I have jollied them, which is not a general custom. I have friends among them—up to a certain point. The frontier is the other side of it.

"But if I can get a passport I can get out without any one's permission. Once I swam across to Persia and walked ten miles into it. But I only had trunks on . . ."

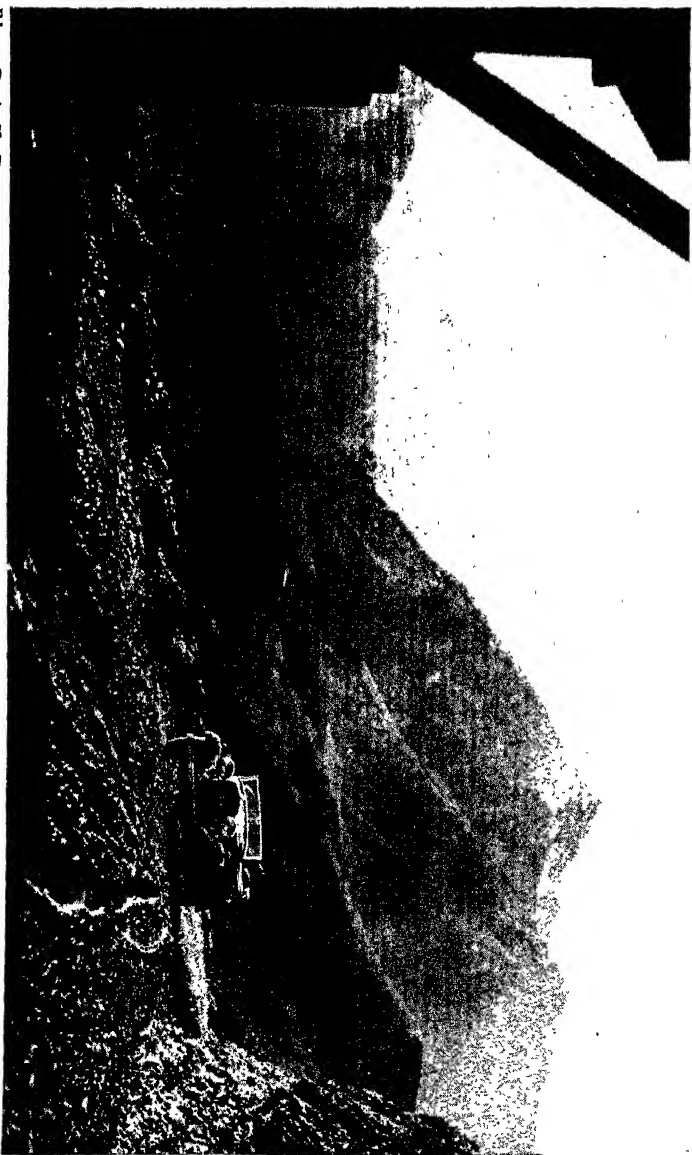
He shifted uncomfortably, as if some unpleasant thought had tapped him on the shoulder, and fell to talking of something else.

Since January 1, 1933, passports have been required of every one in the Soviet Union. They say one of the many reasons is to keep peasants in their villages. Also the requirement gives many more jobs. The passport confusion in a packed room attending to this business is one of the sights of Russia. People must get permission to go to Moscow or Leningrad, particularly to stay there—though young hoboes go north for the summer and south for the winter in spite of all regulations. "Let's see your document" are the first words when any one applies for a job, a divorce, a marriage certificate, any sort of permit; even, in many stores, when one wishes to make the simplest purchase. If you are "not in good standing" you have no passport and without one you cannot get a job, a hotel room, still less a room to live in permanently, food itself sometimes; you cannot even get your mail or telegrams.

You can, you know, buy your way out of the USSR, unless you "know too much." Or, rather, you can be bought out. "You can buy a good wife," even, I suppose, a good husband, from Sovietland, a servant, a skilled assistant. That seems to be the only foundation for the assertion that there is slavery in the Soviet Union. Five hundred and fifty "gold" rubles (call it \$500) will do the trick. In theory the possessor of



that amount can buy himself out, if he is "in good standing," and promises not to come back. But I have heard it asserted too often and by too many kinds of people not to be convinced that those "gold" rubles must be sent in, with all precautions, from the outside. For if a man collects that amount inside the Soviet Union it will probably be confiscated and the holder sent to a prison camp for "hoarding."



*Photo © A. K. Dawson*

*Along the Georgian Military Highway*



No. Not the Koran, But Chaff and Dust at the  
Threshing-Machine Prescribe the Veil,



Her Stock in Trade in the Roslov "Open" Market  
Consisted of Three Tomatoes.

## CHAPTER XII

### ON TO ASIA

*Into the Caucasus . . . The Georgian Military Highway . . . So This is Tiflis! . . . I Sell My Shoes*

I WOKE to a bright sun and seas of sunflowers; shaved and washed in—well, it's the only available place for such things on a Russian train—and opened the brown paper package that had been Rostov's midnight parting gift. Every article inside was wrapped in brown paper too, so that each had to be opened to be identified: four hard-boiled eggs, a tomato, two pickles, four masses of chopped meat, what the Russians call "cutlets"!—I hate culinary mysteries anywhere, but especially in Russia—one apple, one pear, both small, hard, and green; butter enough; a whole loaf of bread, thick-sliced and of the color I eat by choice at home; salt, sugar, a package of "tea," another of sweet "biscuits," a very rusty can of something that slopped (and nothing to open it with); a bottle of mineral water, also with the identity torn off (and nothing to open that with, except the iron-corner edge of my sleeping-shelf). That breakfast marked, as far as I and that milkcan from Riga were concerned, the first and last patronizing of the hot-water faucet at a Russian railway station—though I

think it is a swell idea. The rusty can finally confessed to containing very ancient, deathly pale—well, salmon, I suppose; after which I settled down to my notes, with that damned train phonograph going most of the morning.

Early that afternoon we passed a lonely stone-topped young mountain, standing like a sentinel or advance guard of the Caucasus, a relief after days and days of steppes almost as flat as our prairies. Beslan, a mess of a town, at seven, let us dawdle for an hour or more about a station platform dotted with costumes that probably were picturesque before they got so ragged and dirty. Then we bumped on in total darkness inside an aged boxcar with third-class fittings to Vladicavkaz.

They call it Ordzhonikidze now, in honor of the Chairman of the Supreme Economic Council, more colloquially the Commissar for Heavy Industry, though that doesn't particularly matter. Vladi, it seems, means a portal or gate, but was also the name of a Caucasian cousin of Zanzla Tamara, and Kavkaz seems to have been the original name of what we call the Caucasus. Zanzla Tamara, you remember—no, of course you don't. Neither do I, and I'm sure you can lay your hands on the last volume of some encyclopedia just as easily as I can.

For some reason—recent rains, perhaps—that ride from Rostov to Vla—to Ordzhonikidze had been as clean, for Russia, as the one from Moscow to Rostov had been dirty and dusty. So a sponge bath sufficed. Anyway, when in Rome . . . I mean, it is not only in keeping with a wise old adage but a gesture of polite-

ness to your hosts to space your baths rather widely in the USSR.

The thin white felt hats, looking rather like broad-brimmed panamas, of the Christian Ossetian and the Moslem Ingushetia tribes, who are allowed to come into town since the revolution, are for men only. So the tribesmen are very much incensed because tourist women wear them, buy out the market, in fact, and pay "gold" rubles for them at that. You can imagine how an English schoolboy, for instance, would feel if the girls took to wearing his school cap! Several of these backward tribes up in the Caucasus had no written language until 1922, when they were given one—with Latin letters. They go to school in their own language now; in fact, Soviet schools are taught in some seventy different languages, which was far from the case in tzarist days. But the Russians can hardly help them in the matter of making the "S" backward about three times out of four, even on public and government signboards, because there is nothing in the Russian alphabet as crooked as our S, which in Russia is spelled C.

In the USSR—or the CCCP, as they write it at home—I felt as if I were in the first grade again, spelling out those Russian words. I had to look twice to recognize even in capital letters such familiar words as ТЕННИС and ФУТБОЛЛ, in posters announcing tennis or football games. I had a terrible struggle trying to get a telegraph blank in a post-office one day—until a man stepped up and asked for a "Telegraf blanki." The Russian language will look less formidable, and the East and the West, at least as far as Europe is

concerned, may come more nearly to mutual understanding, if the Soviet authorities some day carry out a veiled threat to adopt the Latin alphabet. But **Р** is a more sensible way of writing **G**; **Ш** rather out-simplifies **SH** too, and **Е** has its advantages over **Ye**, if we should ever agree with the Russians that these are single letters. Think of the libraries and the fonts of type that must go into the discard if the threat is ever carried out!

One can feel less sorry for the abacus if it ever is superseded by pencil and paper. It's a fascinating process—unless you happen to be in a hurry—watching the totaling of one's purchases or one's hotel extras amid the long clicking of little wooden balls on wires. As long as they use the abacus for the simplest calculations we visitors will continue to be mystified, or at least "intrigued," as Hollywood puts it. It seems so much more natural for a queued and long-fingernailed Chinese to manipulate that wooden arithmetic than a blond Slav in ordinary—or even in extraordinary—European clothes. An American I know taught a Russian boy in a few days to figure without the abacus. So perhaps it is not absolutely indispensable to the Russian mind, after all. Or maybe, as Moscow insists, "human nature can be changed." There'd be a discovery!

To get to Tiflis the railroad goes all the way around to Baku—which, by the way, has become a completely new city in five years, they tell me. I never go out of my way, however, to see oil derricks or the kind of civilization that grows up around them. The auto-

mobile trip over the Georgian Military Highway is quicker and more interesting and, with good luck, even more comfortable, and Intourist makes a feature of it. It provides a welcome change from train travel; it kids the simple tourist into thinking he is really getting away from the beaten track and into the quivering heart of things at last, and the name "military" gives him an immense thrill.

We were off at nine sharp—I mean by 10:46—not exactly in a Lincoln but—still, it's all in the family—in a topless Ford bus nearing its final dissolution. To start his engine the chauffeur tied two wires together; pulled them apart when he wanted to turn it off. The back seat was piled high with baggage, not all of it ours. The other seats were a very tight fit. The chauffeur himself seemed to be much worried about the overloading of his laboring old tumbrel; backed up our complaints as far as he dared. But we found that his anxiety was not identical with ours. For when a Fiat carrying a lone first-category Englishwoman overtook us a few miles out and relieved us of four Jewish tourists, he promptly picked up four Georgian passengers—and pushed half a dozen more off the running-board.

"We thought you said there were too many of us?" some one muttered.

"Oh, but they are very small men," murmured the chauffeur, jerking his head deprecatingly backward toward our new companions. One of them *was* perhaps under six feet, without his "bearskin" cap.

The native-passenger trick is played the world over, as far as I know it, wherever the automobile is enough of a novelty so that foreign travelers or their agents



have to make special arrangements. But I had not expected it in graftless Sovietland. Of course it may be that this chauffeur, unlike his fellows in all other backward lands, turned in what the interlopers paid, instead of pocketing it.

The Georgian Military Highway is not what we would call a Class A road even on the ascent from Ordzhonikidze, and it is worse farther on. It is lined here and there with what seem to be big military pre-Japanese-war tunnels cut in the rock, with red sheet-iron tops and many openings for riflemen. But as the highway runs right through some of them perhaps they are only snowsheds. The mountain air is cool and invigorating; on sunny days there are broad vistas of good scenery. The Russians think it the most marvelous scenery in the world. Other travelers have found the Caucasus, with its ten peaks higher than Mt. Blanc, more impressive than the Alps. It may be that our day was more cloudy than it seemed, for there were no striking rows of snowclads visible on the horizon and it was not quite as remarkable a mountain ride as I had been led to expect.

Collections of beehives sweeten the wayside. Villages, then scattered houses, with flat dirt roofs, house a mildly picturesque and thinnish population along the way. Caucasians sit before their doors as if the weight of the "bearskin" cap they wear were almost too much for them. Some, far up in the mountains, wear on shaved heads a cap that looks startlingly like a huge red wig. Think of wearing such caps, and costumes to match, under the hot sun of summer midday! But mountain cold is much more frequent; and, anyway, a

Georgian mountaineer in a straw hat would be an incongruous sight, to say the least. The northern Caucasus is one hundred per cent collective, we were assured. Probably the men can make the women do all the work better that way.

The top of the pass, eight thousand feet up and reputed the boundary between Europe and Asia, is no frontier, not even a halting-place, for we were still far short of halfway. Flocks of fat-tailed sheep graze in valleys high above the tree-line. The road squirms through miles of deep canyons, crawls into snowsheds that imply great avalanches. It was after three when we stopped, famished, for lunch, long after four before we were off again. Boys in quest of kopeks held out to us cups of Narzan water, and later of raspberries, where streams crossing the road never quite brought us to a complete halt. Washouts kept the next batch of tourists all night in this lonely, stream-gorged area, the women sleeping on what we would call a barn floor, the men in the cars or where they could. But we played in better luck.

Water buffaloes began to appear late in the afternoon, grew numerous. The tourist women wanted to know "what are those ugly beasts?" Eight oxen pulling a binder was the only evidence we saw of the Five Year Plan, and there were no signs of military activities. Farther on, our progress was impeded by strings of medieval wagons carrying hungry-looking and worse than ragged families, their sick tumbled among their gunnysack baggage and all manner of noisome goods and chattels. Wagons filled with produce for the Tiflis market slept by the roadside before the sun was

down. Just before dark we looped far down the river to find a bridge, enjoyed the blessing of asphalt the last few miles. Electric lights far and wide up the flanking hillsides produced that familiar deception of a far larger city than daylight would disclose, and we turned up at what we mistook for an incredibly palatial hotel at eight, to find it already nine, Tiflis time, noon in New York.

The best filet steak I had tasted in years, an excellent Georgian wine for a song—not to mention a Hungarian head-waiter agog with the death of Hindenburg and the transfiguration of Hitler—gave the false impression that tourists live like kings in Tiflis. Not quite. Flies and a tropical sun pouring in upon me through a gigantic window allowed me only a scant seven hours' hot sleep. The room was big, and higher than it was wide, rather regal in its atmosphere. But there was no water in it, no mirror in the washroom down the hall, and the toilet was far away around the corner. The cautious and forewarned guest must lock his door and carry key, towel, soap, and sundry brushes to the washroom, lather up, carry soap and brushes and towel back to the mirror in his room—where the deuce *did* I lose that old trench mirror?—lock up again on the way to finish the job in the washroom, journey far away around the corner, carry the male's morning collection of implements back to the room, juggle with them or lay them on the floor while unlocking it. . . . Try shaving under such conditions and see if you don't get exercise enough before you go down to breakfast. But it may have been all subtly

planned, for there was a barber shop, in a hot inside room, on the same floor. Besides, what do a few inconveniences matter when the general atmosphere gives you the impression of living in a palace?

Tiflis is hot. But a constant breeze makes it much cooler than New York was the day I sailed. It is dusty, cobbled with irregular river stones laid on edge—the principal square was even then being repaved with them. But its principal street is a macadamed boulevard, and others are improving. Its second main street is across the swift and muddy Kura, which twists and turns and bludgeons its way through town, leaving behind it high scarred cliffs, house walls rising sheer with them to form a single precipice. The Armenian aristocracy used to live in the center of the city, in what Tiflis calls her best houses—palatial houses, for Tiflis. We would find them rather sad. Their churches, with tin-topped towers of uninspiring shape, punctuate whole sections of the city, but worshippers are few and ragged and far between. Before Communism came, Armenians had all the business in Tiflis, were cordially hated by the Georgians. Now they run all the Government's merchandising enterprises there, and are still cordially hated. For that matter, Georgians will admit in moments of frankness that they also hate the Russians, third in numbers in the population; and the Turks, who are fourth, though they say there are some of the finest fellows in town among them. But on the surface Tiflis seems to the brief and casual visitor to live together in average amity.

The Georgians, sixty per cent of Tiflis, seem gayer, less eager for the task in hand, than the Russians.

They are lazy, to put it succinctly; so are the Armenians, unless they think they will lose money by it. But the Russian, an American-born engineer who bossed large projects told me, plods right on, whether the boss's back is turned or not. While the Russian is slow, naïve, good-natured, long-suffering, the Georgian is quick-tempered, and soon over it. Russians make good husbands, being good-natured and easy-going. The Georgian makes a very bad one. For one thing, he throws his money about. That is one thing the Armenian never does, even when it is plentiful. That second most numerous streak in the Tiflis population is treacherous—he admits as much himself, almost makes a boast of it—does not stick together, tattles on one another, while even the Georgians at least recognize their kinship.

I wonder why we call it Georgia. On automobile licenses (that is, in Russian) it is Грузиня (Gruzinya), in its own tongue it is Sakary Velo. Foreigners, by the way, are *nemhez*, which means "dumb," to the Georgians. It seems the first foreigners to come there were Germans who could not speak the language. But the passing visitor may as well give up the kindergarten task of trying to spell out words by the time he gets to Tiflis, which uses three, even four or five scripts: Russian, Georgian, Armenian, Turkish, the new Latin-letter language of the hill tribes, and if you snoop about a bit you can find Persian, Hebrew, Khirgiz, and what-not.

There are brick chicken-houses with tile roofs in the Tiflis outskirts, but also hundreds of families liv-

ing in rows of sidetracked, discarded boxcars. Yet housing conditions were not so bad as in Moscow or Leningrad. Those "in good standing" got enough food to get along on, according to several of them of widely varying degrees of loyalty to the Moscow régime, but clothing is always a problem. A woman tourist in our party had brought a bundle of old clothes, from her relatives in New York, to an old lady we finally ran to earth in a labyrinthine back courtyard in Tiflis. Her gratitude was far more enlightening on the clothing question than realms of Soviet assurance.

The morning after we got there two American girl tourists, of a merchandising race, started down to the "open" market with a two-dollar New York dress each that had outlived its pristine glory. That reminded me that I was tired of carrying that very aged pair of shoes I had brought along on the chance of needing some day to disguise myself as a Russian. I drifted down to the market and offered them for sale. Anyway, I wanted to see how it felt to be a seller.

Well, sir, competition for those very old shoes verged on a riot and fisticuffs. Finally a man in a sort of semi-uniform, a man who would have been well-dressed in other lands but who swore he had only fifteen rubles in the world, borrowed three rubles from a shoemaker—no, a shoe-patcher—in one of the little patchwork stalls and virtually snatched the shoes away from me, for eighteen rubles. I sold them cheap, but the man who bought them paid dearly for them. Can you crack that one with your teeth? The answer, of course, hinges on what you mean by a ruble, or what a ruble means to you. Meanwhile the merchandising

girls had sold their dresses at forty rubles each, and were implored to bring the rest of their wardrobe. I tried next day to find that fellow who had stepped into my shoes, just to tell him it was all out of curiosity and invite him to help me drink or eat up those eighteen rubles. But he had disappeared without trace, gone somewhere to show off his beautiful new footwear, I suppose.

The "open" markets of Sovietland are probably not very different from the outdoor markets in old pre-war Russia. Certainly they are not so very different from those in the pre-war Russia outside the Soviet fence—Poland, Rumania, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia. Perhaps they are a bit more ragged. Perhaps there are more beggars, less for sale and (to the subjects of Stalin) higher prices. A woman goes racing down the "open" market alley screaming after the thief of a cucumber. You'd think he had just killed her favorite son. Another woman holds out three tomatoes in her hand, her only stock in trade; and while I cannot guarantee it her sharp look probably means that she is keeping an eye peeled for the policeman or market inspector who may at any moment ask her for her seller's permit. Toward dusk two heavily armed policemen saunter through the market blowing whistles and the sellers gather up what remains of their wares as if an air-raid warning had been given. But none of these "open" market scenes are entirely unfamiliar to any one who has wandered about in the countries just west of the USSR. That's another point on which the American who jumps straight to the Soviet Union and back without any previous travel experience brings

home a quite erroneous idea of the horrors of the Russian scene.

The Turkish type of burden bearers, with the *hamal's* barrel-shaped pack-supporter, squat in the shade of shop walls or toil bent double through the streets of Tiflis under—well, two new automobile tires of the largest truck size, for instance. Those of them who are not Turks are nearly all Persians. Those red-wig caps from the mountain villages and the various types of old Georgian costumes, long sheathed knife in belt and all, add to the conglomerate makeshift costumes forced upon the townspeople by the clothing shortage to make Tiflis the happy hunting-ground of camera-armed tourists.

Typhus is no respecter of seasons in the Georgian capital. "Lice in winter and bad water or food in the summer," is the local version of its origin. Too often it is diagnosed and treated as malaria, with fatal results.

A long, dripping, pre-revolution tunnel through the solid rock beneath a fifth-century Georgian kings' fortress on a sharp rocky knoll now well inside Tiflis leads to a Botanical Garden artificially planted with genuine trees and vegetation hardly known elsewhere in this region. A funicular carries those with a ruble to spare up Mt. David, for an embracing view of the long V-shaped city and its rocky, tumbled environs.

Those Persian miniatures reputed by art authorities to be worth coming to Tiflis to see were not to be visible until the next February, in an ex-prison which Stalin knew well that is being fixed up as a museum.



Your diligent student of folkways and all the other reasons for traveling might profit by a longer sojourn in Georgia's capital. But for us mere scanners of mankind the urge will soon come to move on.

## CHAPTER XIII

### IN NOAH'S BAILLIWICK

#### *Down to Erivan . . . Meaner Armenia . . . Some Excursions*

WHEN I woke next morning we were crawling through mainly treeless mountains, an engine pushing behind. Those great open upland landscapes, cool and fragrant from a recent rain, stretching away on all sides to a distant crystal-clear horizon, beautified by cloud shadows, the slopes of a distant plateau pink with some small flower, carried me in memory back to the Andes. So did the misery-personified of those low, flat-topped Armenian villages, made of mud or turf-brick or tumbled stones, with grass growing on the slightly arched dirt roofs.

Then we ground down to a dusty, infertile plain, with evidence of much new building in the larger towns, especially in Alexandropol, now Leninakhan, on a broad plateau that is also a shallow bowl among mountains. A barefoot boy with cheeks of . . . dirty swart stood on a narrow board and drove a team at a trot around and around a threshing-floor covered with newly harvested wheat. We passed almost within stone's-throw of snow-hatted Mount Ararat—there certainly are no signs of flood about it now: dead-flat country, dry as the cactus plains of Texas. On we

rambled, however, stopping long enough at each station for the engine-driver to beget a son, and finally reached Erivan at 5:30. Eighteen and a half hours to cover 248 miles is rather overdoing the delightful leisureliness of the East.

The package breakfast furnished me the night before had consisted of dry bread and cheese, three tiny peaches, a stone-hard pear, and a bottle of very "prickly" mineral water—and the only information I gleaned from the blond but silent guide sent to meet me, during all the dusty, bumpy miles from the station to a hotel where the courtyard was a garage and repair-shop, was that supper would be at nine! Some religions recommend fasting for the good of the soul. But I wish the Russian scheme of things included soup at supper.

Erivan is nothing to come and see, though once there you might as well see it. Living in clouds, a veritable aureole of dust, Asia-dry, barren, miserable, a town still in the cobblestone state in most matters, Erivan is so run down that it is not even picturesque. Only a constant breeze and the view of Mount Ararat across cloudless but beautiful upland spaces save it from complete contemptibility. Anywhere out of the breeze it is unbearably hot in spite of it. Sticky flies . . . Flies are persistent all over the Soviet Union. They have to be to make both ends meet. But in Armenia they are the most sticky I have ever seen, with the possible exception of their close relatives in upper Egypt. Perhaps they learn their persistence



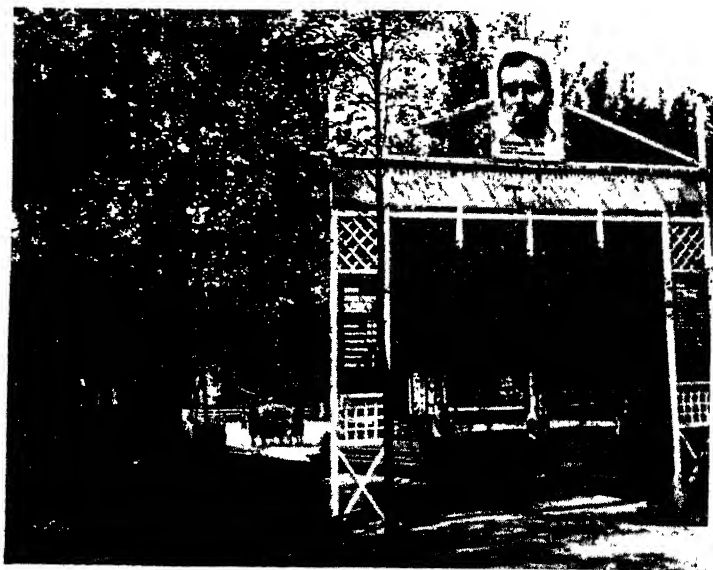
He Wears What Used to Be a Red Army Uniform and Wanders Through the Tiflis Market Begging a Half-Rotten Tomato Here, Casting an Imploping Look Upon a Handful of Cabbage Leaves There.



Cheerfully He Roams the Tiflis Market, for Pickles Are a Favorite Delicacy and Thirst-Quencher in the Caucasus.



The Central Square of Tiflis Was Being Repaved—in Riverbed Cobbles.



Huge Photographs of *Udarniki* (Capable Workers) Adorn Sovietland's Culture and Rest Parks.

from the Armenians, who survive even repeated massacres.

Ragged women lug on their heads great earthenware jars level full of water from the hydrants, back up into the hills whence it comes. There is good running water from the Erivan hills. But in the hotel rooms it is reluctantly poured by the bucketful into the scanty reservoirs of those quaint squirt-you-in-the-face washbowls common to all the Caucasus region. Turn the faucet one way and the water runs into the washbowl quite according to Hoyle. Turn it the other way and it sprays you in the face like a miniature firehose. Caucasians may find this contrivance an excellent reminder to wash their faces, but the stranger's first encounter with it is likely to be mildly startling.

Blond Lydia of Riga, who had been speechless from the moment she met me at the station, confessed next morning that it was only because she spoke German very much more easily than English. Probably she did not dare confess that to the Intourist authorities, because she needed the job. The second confession involved Intourist itself and disclosed that all the available automobiles were off with a party to Lake Sevan. Let me pause to mention that although Armenia has no seacoast it surrounds a sea—and boasts that its beautiful Lake Sevan is the largest body of water in the world at such an altitude. I am not quite sure what Titicaca would retort to that.

But good German is always preferable to bad English and, if you can get a seat, a street-car is better riding than any automobile, to say nothing of a bus, over those endless stretches of cobblestones which

Erivan calls streets. There are few women motormen in Erivan, by the way, or for that matter in Tiflis, though both have their full quotas of street-car hoboes.

The city itself is beginning to keep pace with its modern form of transportation, in the size and style of its many new structures. The Armenian capital is doing much building, using a pinkish stone called tufa, which can be sawed and is as light as the heavier woods. We saw several factories, the largest one still under construction far out in the dusty outskirts, with a fine view of Ararat. But we couldn't see the Ararat liquor factory—where, they say, visitors may sample the wares—because Lydia telephoned to it too late in the morning. Foresight seems to be forbidden by In-tourist rules for guides. The Armenian pictures, reputed to be the best thing in Erivan, were closed too. However, the coins in the Erivan museum outline the whole history of Armenia, coins of all the conquerors or would-be conquerors that have overrun the land since time immemorial; misers' hoards, counterfeits—mankind appears to have been much the same kind of fellow these many centuries.

The Armenians, with their swarthy skins, their parrot noses, their covetous eyes, seem a queer race to be under Russian rule. And of course it is pure bunk to say that it is a voluntary union, that any USSR unit may secede whenever it wishes. There is a regular routine in getting people to join the Soviet Union. The Reds among them, financed from Moscow, work up the roughnecks to start an "autonomous" revolt (I saw it in the act in Urga in 1922) and as soon as the Red flag is up Russia's Red Army marches in and

the game is up. Watch them secede! If a secession movement started, the bosses in Moscow would simply claim it was a minority revolt (financed probably by the wicked capitalistic countries) against the ardent desires of the majority and would place Soviet troops at the disposal of the local Reds. But the Armenians are certainly happier, from all appearances, under the Russians than they were, or would be again, under the Turks.

Lydia found a Ford available after dark and we drove to the cool plateau above, wild driving through the night along a tortuous road often half-blocked by wagons or bullock-carts. The trip had no visible reason, unless it was to spike my guns against a possible complaint that I did not get my day's automobile ride, as specified in the Intourist contract. To be sure, a hydro-electric plant is about to be built on those heights above Erivan, but there was nothing to be seen of that, at least in the dark. It is part of a grandiose irrigation scheme in which the Severn, Erivan's dirty, hurrying little river, is to play its part. But it will "cost expensive," as my Pennsylvania Dutch neighbors say.

On the way back we saw, as if they were lights of the town below us, the fires of the Turks, who, according to Lydia, were burning off the hillsides on a ridge in front of Fuji-like Ararat over in Turkey. Anti-religious propaganda has not cured the Armenians of their resentment that the Turks have annexed the mountain of Noah's alleged sojourn, which they so long considered their private property. Its possession



is not so much a religious question as it is a matter of racial pride and historical covetousness. Ararat is still theirs, but only in the crest now of the Armenian Soviet Republic.

We topped off the evening in Erivan's very good Culture and Rest Park, with meandering white-dressed crowds, Armenian musicians on half-circle stages, *udarniki* on posters, and all the other features common to these refuges from crowded and unrestful, and perhaps uncultured, square-meter homes all over the Soviet Union.

The garage and repair-shop in the hotel courtyard worked all night, and next day, Monday, was Sunday again, because July has thirty-one days. I found room in the back seat of an Intourist bus, where I fought with the spare tire in it all the way out to a monastery with a famous library that has been taken over by the State. How should I remember the name; and does it matter anyway? Seems to me it is the residence of the Catalocus, the head of the Armenian church, and that its most revered relic is a piece of Noah's ark. Well, at any rate, one can be pretty sure of drinking Noah's wine in Armenia. For does not Genesis tell us that Noah the husbandman set out the vineyards that still miraculously draw their sustenance from Armenia's sun-baked soil?

In the adjoining church an endless funeral for a dead Armenian priest was going on. Worse than ragged and dirty street-urchins squirmed in and out underfoot among the black-gowned priests and the badly dressed spectators without drawing so much as a gesture of annoyance. The dead priest was dressed in as nearly

gorgeous robes as Sovietland's churches still possess and was completely covered, face and all, except for his right hand. In that he held a folded paper—a passport to heaven, I suppose, or perhaps a letter of introduction or a recommendation for mercy to the authorities of the other after-world. The living priests, in their sweltering black gowns and black peaked cowls, got so weary of the ceremony that they squatted on the floor or leaned against the walls, still intoning their responses in voices laden with boredom. At last some of them carried the coffin with its soiled draperies out into the blazing sunshine, a sunshine so hot that the deceased seemed to shrink in protest, and the ceremony went on, ragged urchins still squirming in and out. Finally his fellows slowly bore the now surely weary lost brother away to . . .

But by that time we were bouncing back to Erivan for as hasty a lunch as is possible in Sovietland, after which I was bounced to the station and settled down in an airless half-compartment for sixteen and a half hours—even if the train arrived on time—of suffering. But we must all pay for our sins, and going to Erivan is certainly one of them.

## CHAPTER XIV

### WHY THE "BLACK" SEA?

*Backtrack to Batum . . . Restful Days . . . You'll  
Like Yalta . . . Battlefields and Harbors*

THERE is good mountain scenery on the way from Tiflis to Batum, and such things as a third-century Georgian monastery topping a dry hill above a super-new hydro-electric plant. Georgia looks wet and green after Armenia, though compared with most of the United States it seems almost a desert. The change in the morning, however, was mildly like that from the upper Andes to Guayaquil—cloudy, damp, an almost incessant, if sometimes light, rain falling; half-jungle, even the houses raised above the ground on some sort of stilts, mountains barely visible under masses of bluish clouds in the distance. If this region and Armenia could only even up on rain—both would be dissatisfied, I suppose. Tea bushes covered lower hill-sides, much corn grew elsewhere, many trees, so rare in Georgia and Armenia, masses of ferns. Then came long stretches of tea bushes on the flat, like forest nurseries, mountains with striking shapes growing fuzzy in the distance, water-buffaloes slopping about in roads and fields—a very different world, though the train was just as slow and life as dreary as ever.

Two pipe lines from Baku had followed us all night

long, underground. Most of the oil from Baku is still exported through Batum. The train came out along the edge of the sea some time before the journey was over, when a Fiat, adorned with a girl guide who might under happier circumstances have been pretty, snatched me through the rain to the Third International Hotel, formerly the "Noah"—there's a jump for you. Evidently it had been built for Noah's accommodation as soon as he could leave the Ark—one of those typical dark, noisy, stupidly planned hotels of the tropics, with the same musty smell in the rainy season and the same dungeon-like dining-room on dull days that you find all the way from Madagascar to Salvador. The deluge was still on. Over one of the two dog's nests they called beds, in the room I was assigned to with an Englishman, he had used a raincoat and finally an umbrella, after dodging from bed to bed during the night, and still had not slept bone-dry. Fortunately I was not spending a night there. One nice thing about Intourist service is that you get a room even if you are leaving the same evening; and Batum promises a nice new modern hotel another year.

Rain poured more or less all day. But a constant hubbub in the streets showed that incessant rain is too familiar in Batum to curb the ordinary activities of life. I wandered down to what in Spanish-America would have been called the Alameda and had a bath in the warm sea. The dozen little upright bamboo and thin-board bath-houses for males on the stony beach, just off what is the principal seaside promenade on better days, were filled with bums. That's one of

the troubles with Communism. As bad money drives out good, so if a thing is free to any one the worst coins of society will collect there and only the hardier souls patronize it in spite of them. A fellow worthy to be a church beggar in Spain was sound asleep on the floor of one of the shelters, curled up like a cobra. A ragged boy with a leg off sat in the doorway of another, incessantly and aimlessly tossing beach stones. There are many one-legged boys in Sovietland, and most of them, like this one, are not, as you might conclude, unlucky street-car hoboos, but the victims of infection and insufficient doctors or medical supplies.

It was raining, and I suppose the women I had glimpsed in the similar bath-houses on the other side of an imaginary fence were afraid of getting wet. When it looked certain that otherwise there would be no activity at all, I set the example myself by marching into the sea in what Adam wore when he first called on Eve. I did carry a bathing-suit through the Soviet Union, but you know what a nuisance it is to get one wet when you are traveling. A couple of worthy-looking but diffident young men, evidently from the hills, took courage and followed me, even as to costuming—one at a time, however. They would not be so idiotic as to leave all their clothes and money—yes, and my camera and my tickets from Kiev all the way back to New York, come to think of it—in one of those flimsy bamboo caricatures of a sentry-box with only the town bums to watch them, and trust to luck that they looked nearly enough like a penniless native not to seem a temptation.

Our garb created no excitement whatever, though we were just off the main boulevard-park and a pebble's flip from the women keeping dry in the other bath-houses. The sea was warm and oily, the beach stones hard on bare feet, the admiration of the opposite sex as lacking as enticing bathing costumes. I wiped on my shirt, an old-swimming-hole trick I no longer enjoy, and went on about my business.

Late that night we were finally herded down to the German-built (in 1929) S.S. *Krim*. The ship's radio cheered the stevedores—but probably not the sailors—along with "Stormy Weather," sung in faultless American negroid, I suppose in our honor. But of course Europe does a lot of her broadcasting with phonograph records. The few lower-deck benches were soon crowded with deck passengers, all sorts of people lying on all sorts of belongings in all manner of uncomfortable positions all along the alleyways. Take my advice and don't travel first-class on the Black Sea. You will have a mob of deck passengers outside your windows night and day, so that you can neither sleep nor open your curtains, to say nothing of your windows, and the benches and seats supposedly reserved for you on the upper deck will be completely filled with them and their baggage. But it is no use giving advice. Besides, next year all may be different.

We "specials" get second-class on the Black Sea, because not even Intourist knows what might happen if we mingled for three or four nights with that chaos of deck passengers. I got a good cabin with my Russian-born Jewish-American neighbor and two young

Americans who were trying to be communistic—well, at least democratic—in spite of too much mama and too large a papa's pocketbook. Ours was the most quiet part of the ship, the alleyway outside our window, with a locking blind that let the air in and kept sneak-thieves out, piled high with boxes of oranges. We were in clover, except when the winches were working or some one was drawing water somewhere, when the plumbing made an unconscionable uproar—until we learned the trick of sticking a tube of toothpaste under the vibrating faucet handle. How that wealthy fellow-tourist who had paid \$25.41 extra for the privilege of sleeping alone in his first-class cabin would have envied us if he had known! Oh, well, life is more or less of a poker game even under Communism.

Sometime during the night the uproar of winches ceased and we were off, sleeping like four badly assorted babes in the woods. We woke to a bright sun, coasting wooded shores. I've never found the Black Sea any blacker than many other seas, so I assume it is the misery of the inhabitants on its shores that makes it black. But what we saw of them made me a little more willing to live there than in Russia proper. I drifted up onto the upper deck—this being a classless world—and found that most of the third-class or deck passengers had thought of it first. Still, I got a comfortable cane rocking-chair. It had been occupied during the night, it seemed, by a poor Siberiak with a big bronzed blond Russian wife (I am giving them the benefit of any possible doubt), a Siberiak who carried a fountain-pen in the vest pocket of his good

European suit, spent a lot of his time reading *Pravda*, which in Sovietland is about equivalent to reading the *Times* in England, and upset in other ways my conception of what a Siberiak should be. But I don't like stolen chairs claimed as a continuous right by putting a newspaper or your wife's feet in them while you go away and occupy some other seat, perhaps for hours. There were lots of other comfortable cane chairs, anyway, though no one had thought to push them in under the captain's bridge out of the rain. I don't want to leave the impression that the monopolizing of first-class chairs by deck passengers and their baggage is peculiar to Communism. The same thing is just as true of the Greek steamers in the Ægean, for instance. It is merely the eastern-Europe or Asiatic easy-going lack of discipline.

Deck scenes: A chess game on a table made of piled-up suitcases. Men in embroidered caps that look like bits of Bokhara rugs. Bronzed women in low dresses that are nothing above the first swelling of their plump breasts except a narrow pair of suspenders of the same cheap but pleasing material. Some of them are distinctly pretty women. A diaphanous silk smock and a Georgian "bearskin" cap make an incongruous costume on any man. Men in white uniforms, cap and all, white as milk. Soldiers in almost well-cut olive-drab, their big revolvers in good Russian leather holsters. Considerable laughter. Babies and the very old sleeping on their baggage in most uncomfortable positions in every passageway. A hatch that looked from the deck above like piled-up legs and torsos in all man-



ner of queer sexless costumes. Fruits and nuts, cucumbers and melons, tomatoes and onions, for sale at outdoor stands in the waist of the ship. Workers with medals of achievement on their chests. Young men with a medal hanging from a chain, proof that they belong to some athletic or sports organization. A first-class American tourist sleeping on deck, because all the berths were occupied when he boarded us along the way. Frequent gusts of rain turning the placid deck passengers into howling, clawing, scratching mobs in quest of shelter.

Blazing sunshine between the gusts of rain. Two hours ashore in Sukhum, where I bought my wife one of the few things I saw in the Soviet Union worth taking home—a pair of embroidered dancing boots an old shoemaker had spent his spare time for two years making. He had displayed them longer than that on the back wall of his shack shop at five hundred rubles, and was glad to get them out of his sight now for two hundred. The wonderfully green endless gardens of the Black Sea shores piled up to cloud-capped mountains. They say that in very clear weather you can see the snow-clad peaks of the Caucasus. Houses, villages among the trees, dot the sloping shores for hour after hour.

On the second day we had our run ashore at Novorossisk, a big commonplace town, sided rather than backed by a high range of dry hills. For the tropical aspect of the Black Sea coast ends almost abruptly about the second noonday and there remains none of the super-green aspect of the day before. Water-

melons, grapes, juicy pears, huge red apples, the whole gamut of fruits sold at ludicrously low prices—if you do not earn your rubles—in Novorossisk's open market, so cheap they made purchasing almost obligatory, though there was enough, such as it was, to eat on the steamer even without patronizing its sales counters on the open decks—at four times the prices on shore. Women sold dresses quite good enough for country wear in the summertime for the equivalent of forty cents in that open market.

Out of sight of land as we cut across to the Crimean Peninsula, to Kurort Gagni, a happy wedding of mountains and sea, with big new snow-white sanitoriums as well as older buildings in which the nobility used to summer, all of them now for "workers" only. Each union or specific workers' organization has its own rest home in the Crimea.

A delightfully restful trip, with two or three hours ashore three or four times a day. The company seemed to do all it could to give us those runs ashore, instead of trying to discourage shore excursions, as so many steamship lines do. The Black Sea trip makes up for all the hardships of railway travel, makes even the Military Highway seem only a minor respite from it. Just about long enough too; in fact, it was beginning to bore a little when we went to bed on the third night, packed for disembarking in the morning.

Yalta is the queen of all the "workers'" vacation places in Krim-Tartary—Krim to the Russians. One ex-palace of the czar, high above the sea, where now

the proletariat that once was forbidden to approach within miles of it spends its vacations, would bring tears of envy to the eyes of our millionaires. Nor is there any evidence that the workers abuse their privileges in such surroundings, or wantonly damage imperial splendors. Flowerplots, groves, the buildings themselves, are kept in perfect condition; the only sign of harm is the scuffing of many feet on marble floors. Hillsides of grapes—some say they were better kept under private owners—on the way up toward the fantastic gray granite precipices of the beautiful mountains above Yalta to other ex-palaces of the royal family, now places of rest for workers and children. One such estate is the Uzbek Rest Home. Most Uzbeks never saw a tree until they came here—magnificent trees, running water, more than an oasis; and they showed plainly that they appreciated the privilege. How fair the Soviet authorities are in sending those who deserve it most, whether the pushing and the grasping get these favors, as in the "capitalistic" world, I have no means of knowing. Queues and their manners might suggest that they do.

According to our guide, Uzbek women could not "open the face" until 1925, though they worked with open faces in the European towns of Russia. Women were killed by their sons, husbands, fathers when they opened the face—by now we knew she meant discarded their veils. The killers were urged on by the mullahs to form a society against this flouting of the Koran, but when the killers were arrested they told on the mullahs, and now they are rather scarcer. There are, in fact, few mullahs left, though some mosques are

open. A man from Samarcand said the last Mecca group pilgrimage was about 1916, though he knew of two men who had made it in 1932. Queer that the same movement should have overthrown religions so long at enmity with one another—Christian, Jewish, Moslem, and all the rest of the faiths practiced by the 160,000,000 or so. An American resident who has looked deeply into the matter claims the Moslems are more likely to return to the mosques than the Christians to their churches if the Soviet world crumples; that a larger proportion of Mohammed's followers have kept their religion alive inside their atheistic exteriors. I give the information for what it may be worth, and what it may signify.

The czar's wine cellar is a labyrinth of tunnels, some of them forty meters deep in the mountain, and peephole shafts to prove it. Those tourists who can afford it taste five kinds of products of the vineyards in tasters' glasses. But for the rank and file of us Russian wines are sickly sweet; even Russian beer has an oversweetish smack. I tried half a dozen times to buy ordinary table wine to be drunk with meals and each time got one that would be endurable only as an after-dinner liqueur. When at last I found one that went with food it proved to be the cheapest made, a dime or so, bottle and all.

I went down to the cement-walled beach beyond the hotel in Yalta, paid twenty-five kopeks' admission to as much swimming and sun-bathing as I had time to spare. Intourist makes no attempt to exploit this bathing-place for "gold" kopeks, perhaps because few tourists have the nudist colony complex. A score of men—

and double that before I left—were basking in the garb of Eden on wicker sofas, now and then plunging out to sea. Ladies in similar costume were doing the same next door, with only an inadequate bamboo fence between, and that not nearly reaching the water. Of course you can wear a bathing-suit if you wish. A few girls, probably tourists, did; and here and there a scrawny man, evidently ashamed of his physical attributes of manhood, wore trunks, and seemed much more snickery about it than those who did not. The thin and unmended bamboo fence between the sexes shut off open staring between those on the rest-chairs, but it did not hinder any one who cared to peep, even without getting his feet wet. In the water five short yards separated the two groups of bathers. But there were no Peeping Toms, no suggestion of ribaldry, not a hint of indecency, not even in mental attitude. Men glanced over at the women, and vice versa, now and then, as you would at the girl side of a grandstand at a fully dressed football game. But you can see and hear more indecency in a hundred yards at Coney Island than in a year on the bathing-suitless beaches of the whole Soviet Union, and after the first ten minutes or less even a modest American feels as unconcerned as if mankind had never assumed the foolish burden of clothing for mere coverage's sake.

The same unribald atmosphere was true of the magnificent Moscow ballet in the garden theater of Yalta that evening. The female form divine seemed so natural under such surroundings that even those tourists who would sneak into an Earl Carroll show like



In Tiflis the *Hamal*, as Turkey Calls the Human Freight-Car, Progresses at Least in the Style of Burden He Carries.



*Photo © Soyuzphoto*

1. It's Usually the Men Who Wear the Bokhara-Rug Cap. 2. The Russian Summer Haircut Is at Least Thorough. 3. If He wears a Cap, the Russian Likes it to Have a Military Cut. 4. A *Udarnik* Who Fulfilled his "Plan of Work" 120 Per Cent.

a deacon into a speak-easy quickly lost all evidence of seeing more in those rhythmic posturings than if they had been performed by figures sprung to life from famous paintings. I am no dramatic and still less a ballet critic. But I have faint hope of ever seeing a more entrancing performance than under the sickle moon at Yalta that evening. To the native portion of the audience even the "capitalist" in one dance brought only breathless attention instead of—well, smiles at least; for he wore complete full dress, even to top hat—on one side only, and nothing but the scantiest hint of a loincloth on the other.

That was a rough bus-ride along a beautiful coast resembling yet different from Amalfi or the Corniche, vineyards and workers' palaces dropping into the sea, all the road a great twisting and squirming with sudden very sharp ups or downs after hairpin turns, drivers just missing one another by a hair. At one place the road ran through thousands of beautiful trees, some of them huge; in others tobacco grew luxuriantly. Beyond the forty-minute stop at a many-domed church in a magnificent situation overlooking the sea and a long stretch of the coast—because it is a workman's restaurant and barroom now, with the remnants of a red flag flying "arrogantly" from the tower of the topmost dome—the country grew more and more dry and stony, the beautiful jagged gray crags above us along the coast dropped below us and out of sight as we climbed to the plateau, with dry towns in notches of dry hills, until the landscape had completely changed,



decidedly for the worse, by the time we passed the cliff of Balaklava and came to Sevastopol.

And was my face red, I who many years ago was a teacher of languages and always a student of phonetics, I who have been around so much and given so much attention to geographical place-names, I who am almost a highbrow when it comes to correct pronunciation, to find that instead of being pronounced as I have always pronounced it since I first learned "The boy stood on the burning deck, whence . . ." no, I guess it's "Rode the six hundred . . ." that it is really Seevast-toe-pole, with the accent on, of all places, the toe! All sensitive tourists suffer acutely from this discovery. Luckily, most tourists are not sensitive.

It looked at first like a village lost among hills, but turned out to be quite a city, of which those first very white little houses with dull-red tiled roofs, strewn up and over rocky hillsides, were only the far outskirts. Huge buildings stood out across the beautifully blue, almost landlocked harbor, decorated with warships and sailors, and in some of the other outskirts. There were signs of much fortification, probably pre-revolutionary for the most part, perhaps even pre-Crimean War. But Sevastopol is very evidently considered an important place by Trotsky's successor.

There was snappy service in the Intourist hotel there too. The daily deluge of tourists descends upon it about noon and has to be sent away by boat to Odessa, now and then an odd fellow like me by train to Dnieprostroi, all by four o'clock, so it won't have to lodge them. Very few tourists actually sleep in Seevast-toe-pole, though it leaves the feeling that a per-

son of placid tourist temperament might delay his departure twenty-four hours and not waste them entirely—any more, I mean, than mere travel always wastes them.

## CHAPTER XV

### UKRAINIAN WONDERS

*Another "Hard" Night . . . Of Course You Must  
See Dnieprostoi . . . On to Kharkov . . .  
Industrious Kiev*

THE train dragged out along that Sevastopol harbor of blue water that narrows until it peters out entirely, passed some big limestone quarries cut back into great square-cornered caves high up above earlier diggings in the stone cliffs in row-of-stones formation. White-gray cliffs stood out for a glimpse or two above fruit-growing plains, then the monotonous flatness of almost all the Soviet Union descended upon us.

There were many fruit-venders at the stations through that fruit belt. As usual, the fruit had been picked a bit too soon and almost all of it was harder and greener than it would have been at its best. I suppose they can't quite wait until it gets ripe, any more than in China. Thieves might get it or they are too hungry or need the money it might bring too badly to wait; or perhaps centuries of this has given them the preference for unripe fruits and nuts the Chinese have.

My fruitful musings were interrupted by a sound familiar to all family men. I looked down the platform to see a brave soldier-policeman arresting a ten-

year-old girl who looked startlingly like one of the daughters I had left at home. He had snatched her basket of *pomidori* (Russia uses the same word as the Italians for tomato, perhaps to avoid the controversy as to whether the "a" is long or short) away from her by twisting her arm in true third-degree fashion and was dragging her away crying. He didn't attempt to touch the many other venders, though these slunk along ready to dodge or run and showed us melons and such things inside bags, furtively. I bought one right under the nose of the train GPU, but he never said "boo." I was rather hoping he would, though I hardly had Russian and gestures enough to tell him what I thought of this business.

The skirted trainman woke me at 3:30 and put me off at some station or other at four. There was no Intourist representative to meet me, for the first and only time during my Soviet travels. Was I frightened, I who had never before in my life been dumped unchaperoned into a strange city where I didn't even speak the language! However—don't ever again tell me there is no intelligence in Russia!—the porter I couldn't tip (for tourists of course have no way of getting paper rubles) put me on a bus at the station door and the bus (on which of course I had no way of paying my fare) bumped me what felt like fifty miles but probably was nearer fifteen kilometers over cobbles to some other city and turned me over to the night watchman of a workers' home posing as a hotel. He suppressed a yawn out of mere pre-revolutionary politeness and got the night chambermaid to put me to

bed in quite a pleasant little room, where I slept until 8:30. I hope Intourist has liquidated its indebtedness to that porter and bus-driver.

There were two rooms opening off the same little interior hallway, as in at least one New York hotel I know, one of them a double room and the other for a bachelor or the third corner of a marital triangle; and a third door led to quite a modern shower-bath and toilet. When they do get around to it the Soviet authorities furnish their workers very decent lodgings, lacking little except the luxury of spaciousness and privacy. Breakfast; then finally an American couple and a French couple and, as guides, a French-speaking Russian woman and a man who had lived twenty years in the United States—all six of them Jewish, by the way—boarded a bus with me and we spent three hours seeing the dam and spillway and powerhouse and all the rest of Colonel Cooper's handiwork—which, as far as I am concerned, could have comfortably been done in half an hour's walk.

The Dnieper now is a big blue lake covering many villages, several of them German villages, brick villages, wooden villages, submarined for fifty miles up the river. The old railway and its bridge were inundated too, so that where there was once a station there are only a few remnants of it and the connecting tracks left on an island. As at Gatun, they rescued the things that seemed worth saving and left the rest to their watery grave. There are three locks, each  $12\frac{1}{2}$  meters high, which lift or lower large boats  $37\frac{1}{2}$  meters in all, over a place where rapids formerly stopped them. The harnessing of the Dnieper was

often thought of and studied, even in tzarist days. There are tons of papers on the subject. But private owners always held the land too high—until suddenly they didn't hold it at all and the project went through. I heard several times during the summer that the harnessing of the Dnieper was partly a sop to the Ukraine, which had threatened to exercise its right (?) to secede. Seven of the nine turbines are finished now and all seven, they claim, have been operated, though only three were running. It is the largest power plant in the world—or maybe they are the largest turbines in the world; I remember them saying Niagara Falls is second, and that five of the transformers were made by the General Electric and the other four were copied from those by Soviet workers, with G.E. permission. The completed plant will run all trolley lines and factories within a 250- or 300-kilometer radius, already furnishes electricity to private consumers for half a kopek a KWH, in contrast to thirty-five kopeks before the revolution. The reason it is working at only one-third capacity now is because the factories and all that sort of thing it is to serve have not yet been completed.

I could go on more or less indefinitely repeating what the ex-American guide told us about the power plant at Dnieprostoi or Dnieprojes or Dniepro—something else—it seems the Russian or the Ukranian language is such that the name has to be changed with each step forward in the project. But I have a suspicion that you are as easily bored as I am by the working details of the marvels of science that make life so easy for the rank and file of us to-day. Forty workers run the whole show now, with all the latest gadgets

and controls. No photographing is allowed in the power plant, because the guide has photographs of everything for sale.

Dnieprostroi or whatever it should be called to-day is a splendid accomplishment, without even adding those weasel words "for Russia." True, the best workers' apartments are obviously jerry-built by our standards, but much has been accomplished in the building of row after row of apartment homes for the workers, with parks beside them and all that sort of thing, as well as factories. Elaborate building, but a dreary place for any one not of the factory-hand mentality and hired-girl tastes.

Please do not conclude, however, that Dnieprostroi is not worth visiting as far as us machine-morons are concerned. That almost constant procession of big trucks, for instance, so full of factory workers at certain hours that they have to stand like matches piled on end, is an interesting spectacle, and a stroll through that unbelievable overflow town of shacks and human dog-kennels on the hills outside the city beyond the railroad tracks the rising lake has made useless is enlightening, even though Intourist guides do not admit its existence. Women cook outdoors at mud ovens; stovepipes protrude from hundreds of mud-and-pole hovels with mud-and-straw roofs; women slap on these roofs with a kind of broom after their regular day's work is done; there are beds out of doors; the communal toilets are worse than the vilest of Americans can imagine. A lot of other unkind words might very justifiably be said of that overflow town. But I remember that the shacks of some of those who dug the

Panama Canal were not always sweet-smelling mansions with faultless plumbing, and that some of the diggers took a long time after the big job was over to find another and move on to a place where they could live like human beings.

I've forgotten again to look up the name of the city where visitors to the Ukraine's greatest modern project leave and take the train. What is more to the point is that I had to leave my comfortable lodging in Dnieprostoi for the station there at nine so my guide and his friend from Kharkov could drink the sweetish but harmless Russian beer and listen to the three-gypsy—they looked Jewish to me—"orchestra" in the station restaurant-waiting-room until the train finally came in at 11:30 and was off again at 11:45. I suppose it is a dreary life at Dnieprostoi. Mobs of would-be travelers slept on their baggage all about the station and its environs. The leader of the orchestra came to beg pennies like a hand-organ monkey—from tourists. If the natives gave him anything it was a cigarette or a sip of their sweetish beer.

Kharkov, ex-capital of the Ukraine, has twelve hospitals. The one they show tourists, the Polyclinic, is huge and very well-equipped, looks at least to the layman to be and to have everything a hospital should be and have, down to mud baths and the latest forms of electrical treatments, all free to "workers." All the dentists and patients in its dozen dental chairs were women that day, but they said that was only a happenstance. Girls were getting obligatory nose and throat treatment, with individual nose sprays. Men were tak-



ing a similar treatment in a common room full of vapors. Among the trees behind the hospital are a score of small houses where workers can spend their nights or their spare time and be under medical observation while still doing their jobs.

There is still a shortage of doctors in the Soviet Union. The doctors of the old régime were liquidated. To-day the sons and daughters of workers are being trained to take their places, but there are still not as many as are needed, nor as competent. But villages that once had no doctor are now in many cases well supplied, they say. In Sovietland doctors can, and do, have private practice. You can call in the doctor you like, and pay him yourself, if you wish—and have the money. But every doctor must work for the Government, giving a certain number of hours to clinical service, at a modest salary; and people always have the right to free medical attention and hospitalization—at least those “in good standing.”

That Russian-born physician who lives near me dropped into an Apteka one day and sought relief for a fellow-tourist.

“Of course,” he began, “I cannot prescribe for him. I am licensed only in America. But . . .”

“Prescribe, by all means!” cried the druggist, “and I will fill your prescription. We have no such silly laws, as far as I know. And why not stay in Russia, now you are back?” he continued over his pestle and mortar. “We need more good doctors.”

“And start to build up a practice all over again, at my age?” laughed the caller.

“Comrade,” retorted the druggist, “stay in Russia

and I will assure you a job this evening and all the 'practice,' as you call it, you can handle by to-morrow morning."

The railway workers' cultural center on the other side of town was surprisingly complete and modern. Its radio broadcasting station has a most ingenious kind of soundproofing. I'll refrain from going into technical details again so soon, but I mean it was a bright idea on some one's part to overcome the scarcity or the complete lack of necessary materials or their prohibitive price, which is not without its bearing on the future of the Soviet Union. A man was lecturing in another room to a roomful of those who furnish food to trainmen and passengers. It was an intent audience, yet very much the atmosphere of a faculty meeting, if you know what I mean. I wonder how many hours of forced lecture attendance after the day's work is reputedly done Soviet spokesmen deliberately overlook when they harp so much on the shortness of the working day?

There are many new buildings, some of them huge, in Kharkov; it is much more of a city than I expected. You felt as if you were getting back into Western civilization again. Gradually you came to realize that the Ukrainians are different from the Russians in more than language.

In contrast, that big Orthodox church that bulks so high above one section of the town that it suggests itself as a goal for an unguided walk is closed, most of its windows smashed, much of its plaster knocked off, even two of the big granite steps broken, with squatters living in the basement and an unpleasant mess all about

the building, so imposing at a distance. It is much farther from the surprisingly modern center of town than it looks, too, so you will probably be glad to take the street-car back, if you have anything you can use for money outside Intourist and Torgsin circles.

The Ukraine is a greener, wetter, more energetic land than the rest of the USSR. Kiev, now the capital, has a very lively air. Its Continental Hotel is excellent; and let me especially recommend Room 86, on the top floor back, where there is never a breath of noise and you need not even draw the shades. The toilet-and-shower anteroom was even supplied with an attempt at toilet paper, as if to give us the lie at the last moment. So maybe by next year all the fulminations of all the foreign travelers in the Soviet Union against the absence of that indispensable evidence of culture will be out of date. Yes, the beginning and the end of my Russian trip were good, as far as hotels go. Perhaps there is management back of it, breaking you in gently and sending you off with pleasant last memories.

That plump, not bad-looking guide assigned us in Kiev was so good-natured and full of fun that even the overworked joke of telling her she was no real Russian or true Communist because she had been married twelve years to the same husband only seemed to increase her jollity. Or was she getting even with us behind her smile when she took us for a ride in that yowling bus again, bumping us for two hours over cobblestones that seemed to loosen our back teeth, just to show us the drab town across the river where all

Kiev's Jews had to live in tzarist days and where many of them still do, for economic reasons now, I suppose. The place is flooded yearly, they say, which is why the houses have two stories, the top ones connected with the highway by makeshift bridges. When floods come, every one moves into the upper story. Lavra, where one sees old churches, ex-monasteries, prison dungeons, catacombs, and skulls and skeletons enough to last a lifetime, had been ride enough, without this added torture.

The "operetta" next door that evening would perhaps have been more entertaining to at least one spectator if it had not been in Ukrainian, which was probably natural. But it demonstrated even to a linguistic alien that Communism does not liquidate those people who enjoy the vaudeville brand of public entertainment reduced to its inaneth degree.

The orchestral concert in Kiev's Culture and Rest Park next evening more than made up for that gratuitous suffering, even though, announced for 8:30, it really began at 10:25 and was still going strong when the cold wind and hunger drove us home to supper after midnight. Yes, cold; and not a week before I had said I would give almost anything to be cold again. Large poster portraits of Schubert and the Russian composer who shared the program with him hung beside the half-circle outdoor stage, and the audience was obviously not there for the sake of showing itself in Society. But rubles must mean a lot to the majority, where only a scattered score or two will pay five or even three of them for seats and a reasonable proximity to the stage instead of massing on foot outside

the distant barrier at the fifty kopeks charged for entrance to the park.

I was really thirty-one days in the USSR. For I decided to stay over a day, at five dollars, mainly to see St. Sophia, which for some mumbled reason was not open to visitors on my natural last day there. After a day of false alarms a bus-load of us was finally collected after five in the afternoon and set out in charge of a French professor of archæology, or mosaicology, or whatever the exact word is, who had lived so long in Russia that even his mannerisms were Russian. St. Sophia's yard was full of soldiers in tents, which explained the attempt to talk us out of visiting it. It is said to be remarkable, second only to its namesake in Istanbul. But there is not very much of absorbing interest within its gloomy walls to the average layman. Some of its unretouched pictures and mosaics are of "immense historical importance," according to the Russified Frenchman, left behind, one suspected, when Napoleon retreated. Somehow I couldn't help wondering how anything can be of historical importance in a land where history, even as it is taught in the schools, is reputed to begin in 1917.

## CHAPTER XVI

### LET'S THINK IT OVER

*Who Said Communism? . . . It's a Different World  
. . . Still Musing . . . Them and Us*

IF my key fingers have slipped now and then and I have spoken of Communism as the present status in Russia, please don't credit me with being so stupid as not to know that what the Soviet Union is practicing to-day may be roughly defined, for want of a better name, as a cross between State Socialism and State Capitalism. They will tell you so themselves, adding that this stage is only one of the steps along the road they are following to eventual Communism, the "ideal state." Personally, I think they are steadily moving away from, not toward, Communism, that Bolshevism is a fire that is dying down, just as the French Revolution gradually receded from the ultra-radical goals it set itself in the beginning. But who wants any but his own opinion on the subject? Anyway, as the Sage of Claremore says, Communism is one-third practice and two-thirds explanation.

The present Soviet system includes, not always even in modified form, almost everything Communists rail against in capitalistic countries: scales of wages, competition between plants and individual workmen, payment according to the quantity and quality of work

performed, a bonus as well as wages for overcoming sales resistance, and so on. Money buys; poverty suffers. Money left in a bank draws interest. For all its anathemas against private property, the Soviet régime does *not* levy 100 per cent death taxes; you can leave a reasonable amount to your children, if not to whomever you choose. Coöperative houses are owned for thirty to sixty years by those who join together in building them, which obviously means that they can be inherited.

Property comes first in the USSR too, just as in capitalistic countries. If people die in accomplishing the building program laid out by the Government, what matter, so long as the buildings are built? *Udarniki* are as much envied as the higher-up men under capitalism. The *udarnik* gets more money; a better home, choice of vacation, better buying facilities, and many other advantages, just like the go-getter in a capitalistic society. Giving the great mass of workers just enough to keep them from starvation, all they produce going to the State, is surely no great improvement on capitalism. Much is made of the emancipation of the peasant. True, he is no longer called a *muzhik*, but if he pays the same amount in taxes or contributions in kind to the State as he did to the landlord under the old régime, where is he any better off?

All men were not created equal, either in ability or trickery, and envy comes to a head every few centuries or generations—faster as the means of intercommunication improve—and the have-nots fall upon the haves and rend them limb from limb, as they recently did in Russia. But what people won't realize or admit is that



Not a Holocaust, But a Few of the Deck Passengers Who Made Strolling Difficult on Our Black Sea Steamer.

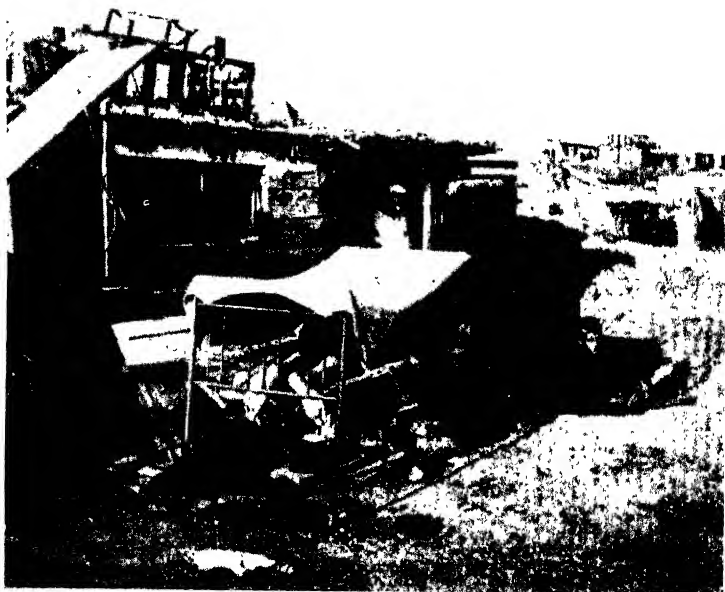


A Jehu of Sevastopol Waiting for Some One to Take a Nice Carriage-Ride Behind His Gaunt Horse.





Mother and Daughter Slap on the Typical Straw-and-Mud Roof of Dnieprostoi's Overflow Shack City.



Another Home, Sweet Home in the Outskirts of Dnieprostoi.

aristocrats, rich people, top dogs, nobility, or whatever you want to call them, are like sumach: you can cut them all down every August, even do your best to tear them out by the roots, and they'll be head-high before winter sets in again. Reason? Man's best and man's worst traits, ambition and selfishness, which are more or less hopelessly intertwined. Even in a frontier mushroom town a bully soon develops who wants to boss every one else, and unless and until some one thrashes him he does. The only astonishing part is the sheep-like quality of us "common people" who submit to it, more now than in frontier days, the "good old days," if you prefer, because to-day the masses are soft; like a kept woman they love comforts more than liberty, hate exertion, especially mental exertion—to put it more succinctly, they lack guts.

The Soviet Union is fond of calling itself a "classless" society. Classless society, my eye! The new aristocracy has a good government job, a high-priced American car to ride in, an apartment with several times the fifteen square meters per person the law allows and more luxury than they would dare show the masses of the people; a *datcha* or place in the country, and probably a pretty mistress. No classes? Watch a ragged, shrinking baggage-carrier trotting along beside an important Soviet official on a station platform!

Communism? You should have seen how quickly the boy at a Russian station picked the largest bun in the food-basket a friend of mine held out to him! Comradeship? Privilege always fights for itself, even for a train seat or a deck chair. One for all and all for one; everything for the masses and nothing for the

individual? Well, for one thing, Bolshevism kills off exaggerated politeness and "After you, Gaston"ism. But there being little roughneckery in the Russian character, an ingrained courtesy, unselfishness, patience instead, politeness has not gone by the board; it is merely bad form to lay courtesy on too strong, a reversion to the ideals of the hated bourgeois. With an almost entire lack of these qualities among our heterogeneous lower classes Communism would probably be just plain purgatory with us.

The Russian of to-day is so completely cowed that any one with a commanding voice or eye can drive him around; he looks at you with amazement if you tell some one to "Go to hell!" or even, "No, I don't take sugar in my tea." Talk about the United States being standardized! Yet it is not true that the subjects of Stalin dare not openly talk politics—under certain conditions. On our Black Sea steamer a great mob gathered about my unhired interpreter, packed the room virtually to suffocation, filled every window and door during four unbroken hours of arguing individualism versus collectivism, and no one so much as suggested that such discussions were forbidden in public. The good nature and the vehemence, the young girls and the badly dressed workmen who had things worth while to say, were no less astonishing than the unbelievable freedom of speech itself.

It is hard to grasp at once the completely changed point of view of no private property. There are, for instance, virtually no advertisements at all in the USSR—except government propaganda. It takes a trip to Russia to realize that our newspapers and our

broadcasting companies are so completely tied to the apron-string of business interests that they are distinctly arrayed against the consumers, which means the great mass of the people. There is no exploiting of beaches in Sovietland, either by keeping people off them or by requiring them to wear bathing-suits, so that clothing stores and the owners of beach cabins can get their rake-off; no protest from the hatters' guild if men decide to wear no hats; no Christmas turned into a yearly drive by merchants to flood the country with a lot of mainly useless or unneeded merchandise. Pretty girls don't exploit their looks by angling for a "capitalist," but marry or give their unmarried favors to whom they choose. Under such a régime the radio and the cinema can be made educational, cultural, instead of an almost unbeatable opposition to all our educational and cultural efforts.

Yes, under such a régime people have many advantages: leisure, parks, beaches, sanitoriums, paid vacations—but not those of privacy and congeniality. You live like a big conducted tour—in third-class at that. If you like people as the Iowa farmer's wife likes the pictures in European galleries ("Oh, they're *all* so lovely!") then you will like the Soviet brand of life. But if you are at all choosy it will be anathema to you.

Well, at least the absence of taboo is refreshing; people are not afraid to walk under ladders; and when you are tired of being high-hatted—or of high-hatting—just run over to the Soviet Union for thirty days' respite. There is no looking down noses in a classless society. Moscow has cleaned out the Smart Alecks

and the dilettanti and the wasters and given life a purpose. She has debunked nearly all the pomposities and stuffed shirts of life. One thing at least people can be sure of under Communism: no one is noticeably better off than his neighbors. But of course it isn't really Communism in Russia—yet. I wonder if real Communism will kill off sophisticated airs and sharp practices entirely.

No rich people, no fat people, unless it is in high political circles. You never see a wealthy or a corpulent or a haughty or a haughtily-dressed person or one who lifts his eyebrows at those who labor or who have not inherited or won themselves a life of ease and comfort. No advertisements, workers first, important industry before the unimportant, the younger generation before the old, woman not an economic burden, any more than she was in the Garden of Eden. No longer is there that puberty-to-marriage strain—let's be honest with ourselves—upon the nervous system which in some cases affects the whole after-life of our boys (and, for all I know, the girls). **Because** in Sovietland boys and girls can marry easily and as early—and almost as often—as they like, since both have jobs and divorce is a matter of a few minutes and cents, abortion of a few days. True, the girls in full Soviet swing say they are too busy to get married; boys too; which suggests a bridal night now and then when they unexpectedly happen to have an evening off. Well, it is no disgrace either to themselves or to their children if they choose to yield to the urgings of nature without the formality of marriage.

The past is vitiated, tradition is dead, in the USSR

and, in so far as its ideas and ideals spread, in the world at large. Thus the study of history becomes of less value than formerly, more like seeing an old museum or reading old books just out of curiosity as to how people lived and thought in other times rather than in the hope of learning something useful from them. The wise man no longer takes much stock in the traditions of the past. We must form a new code of opinions, in other words use our heads, which have so long lain fallow; put out to sea again, politically, economically, esthetically, when we thought we were safely in the bay. We must recognize that we have entered a new era, in which the wisdom of the past is now of very little value, a new epoch—not old times sheathing naturally, like fish-scales, into the new, but a complete break with the past.

I can't quite analyze why I felt so good in the USSR. Perhaps it was lack of envy, or because misery likes company. Perhaps it gave me a sense of superiority to feel that I could get away from it all at any moment I chose, while the great majority about me had to stay and go through with it to the bitter end. Perhaps it was the real sense of camaraderie, the mere form of greeting, "Tovarish, Tovarishi,"—"Comrade, Comrades,"—irrespective of sex or age or present condition of servitude. Perhaps it was the feeling that so little matters, after all, or that, bad as things are, they might quite conceivably be worse. . . .

Personally, I had no more sense of danger in Soviet-land than in Omaha (though some things you can do in Nebraska you can't do in Russia). I was conscious of

nothing like the restraint one feels in most of the countries bordering the Soviet Union on the west; no sense of constraint at all compared with Italy, for instance. Perhaps that was because of the vastly different character of the two peoples: bombast versus naïveté; perhaps because the Russian soldier is a delightfully simple boy who soon opens up when you speak to him, while the Italian soldier or policeman tries to be fierce and superior and important.

There is a bust or a plaque or a portrait or a chromo of Lenin in every factory or schoolroom, in every club, office, government bureau, even model-prison cell, in every private house I entered in the Soviet Union, to say nothing of everywhere outdoors. Substitution is always easier than elimination, and just as the early Christian Church substituted a new saint for an old pagan deity, usually on the same altar and with the same functions, so the likeness of Lenin seems to take the place of the outlawed ikon. Personally I'd as soon see them worshipping Christ.

At least life is less of a poker game under the Soviet scheme of things, with the best players—or card-sharpers—winning most of the stakes. It is good to see “working” people sitting in the parquet and not always hanging hump-shouldered over the edge of the balcony with a bird’s-eye view of the stage and of overfed dowagers and grasping “captains of industry” who probably enjoy the play far less than they do. I wouldn’t exactly say that the meek have inherited the earth, but at least the haughty have been put more nearly in their place.

I am not a Communist, by a long shot. But I be-

lieve that cutting inheritance down to the actual needs of the inheritors would be a long step toward keeping Communism from coming to America; and it is because I hope never to see Communism the law of my native land that I urge every American who can possibly do so to visit the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, to the end that he may see his own land more distinctly upon his return. Surely he will realize that something genuine must be accomplished toward doing away with the more wicked inequalities of fortune if things are not to bust wide open and the pendulum swing clear to the other extreme, as happened in Russia.

My own guess is that the United States is probably not going Communistic. We would scorn to copy our social structure from the most inefficient people on the globe. If the Germans, for example, had adopted Communism they might by now have an attractive sample to show us. But to expect the most hare-brained, incompetent race on this particular cinder in the sky to devise and develop our new form of society is just plain silly. We are, however, almost certainly due for big changes and those changes may include a few cuttings from the great Russian experimental garden. If, as many fear—or hope—capitalism has already about shot its bolt and is due to get worse instead of better, then our imports from the Russian political nursery may conceivably outstrip our home production. In any case, only the foolish will continue to poohpooh everything that is going on over there.

Things were so bad in tzarist Russia that probably they had to have a revolution instead of trying to mend them. I wonder if the Russian revolution has broken



the impact of Communism or something resembling it which may come to the rest of the world, so that we can be less violent and more reasonable when it comes. I doubt it; it is hard for the human race to go only half-way.

Manual labor was disgraceful in tzarist Russia, so the new masters had to work up an enthusiasm for it. A lot of other countries, South America, for instance, could do with some of this glorification of labor. But it is hardly necessary in the United States. Our "captains of industry" are too recently from the soil to be horrified at the thought of work, as the Russian aristocracy largely was. Our financial giants are not yet exactly Grand Dukes, even if they do have many grand-ducal qualities and points of view. Moreover, Russia had no middle class, and where there is a large middle class there is little danger of Communism, unless those who run things get just too crooked and up-pity for any use.

Moscow has never realized how difficult if not impossible it is to turn a middle-class country to Bolshevism. The Soviet Union has spent much money on proletariat propaganda abroad, naïvely thinking that because it worked with their own people it will with others. To my mind, it is money wasted; no propaganda is needed. Just show us success. Conversely, it seems to me, we need waste no money in propaganda against Bolshevism, that it is much more effective to let them stew in their own juice and have the rest of the world come to see them doing it.

It takes a journey to Sovietland to realize how very traditional, conservative, old-fashioned, we Americans

are. But things go in cycles; pendulums swing; we are probably in for fifty or seventy-five years of experimentation and adaptation and adjustment, and in that new century Russia may be the most traditional and conservative country on earth and the most radical and non-traditional may be—who knows? Perhaps old England herself.

“Boy, they sure have leveled people!” cried that Russia-born neighbor of mine whose linguistic abilities and racial lack of diffidence made my Soviet journey so much more fruitful. “Do you follow my point of view?”

I do; in fact, it is exactly the word that fits the impression left by a visit to Sovietland. Like an earthquake the Russian revolution has leveled almost everything before it—yet when all is said and done Russia is still Russia. You can't change a people overnight by changing their government, as Moscow is gradually beginning to realize.

The word that occurs most often in Soviet propaganda is “exploit.” I asked in fear and trembling whether I would be rated an exploiter, in spite of all my calluses, whether my children would be disfranchised, my wife shot . . . But it seems that “writers are very highly regarded” in a Communist society. Stalin himself has called them “engineers of the mind.” For those few kind words many thanks. Writers and artists—in Sovietland they usually mean artists of the stage rather than of chisel and canvas—belong to the Soviet aristocracy of to-day. Authors get their returns from foreign rights in *valuta* and are among the most

pampered and wealthy people in the Soviet Union; and what's more to the point, since money can never be the main urge of the writer (otherwise he would go into brick-laying) he gets far more honor and respect than in at least one capitalistic country I could name. Although I have said there are no automobiles for sale to private individuals, writers and artists do drive about in their own limousines. Almost no one, it seems, is better off under the Soviet scheme of things than an author. Why, then, struggle against the rising tide of Communism?

The Russians and many of their fellow-victims or beneficiaries under the sickle-and-hammer banner being a backward, child-like people, who are moved by slogans, by the sort of things we use to stir up children in the grammar grades to do their best work, Moscow's psychology is probably just the thing for them. But I wonder if our workmen could be urged to better efforts by huge pictures of themselves on triumphal arches in the parks, as *udarniki* are. The Russians are childlike enough to delight in it; maybe we are too, our Lindberghs to the contrary notwithstanding. But it is my feeling that only adult children like the Russians could be bullied and jollied along the way they have been and not burst out now and then in—well, at least in sarcastic humor. Some do, and perhaps live—or die—to rue it. But the general air is to take everything in all seriousness, perhaps because the GPU will catch you if you don't watch out.

If we could get our "workers," our rank and file, to enjoy art, to study our museums, listen to the opera as the proletariat seems to enjoy such things in Sovietland,

it might be worth Communism. The Soviet scheme of life seems to have cut the jazz mentality out of the herd, keeps the Russian equivalent of baseball and pole-sitting down to their just proportions. It certainly would do no harm if some of the Soviet seriousness could be instilled into our youngsters, nay, even into our tired business men.

We worry, some of us, about bringing up and educating our children. No need for that under Communism. But also under Communism even if you earn money you can't have any choice in their up-bringing, can't send them to private schools, for instance—there are no private schools left in the USSR, except a few for foreign workers' children—so from that point of view you lose in either case. We seem to have our choice between two forms of society, two theories of life: worry and hope versus security and hopelessness.

The Russians appear to be as devoted to their children as any other people, crèches, children's sanatoriums, and regimentation of young people notwithstanding. The earlier Soviet notion that children should have equal authority in school with their teachers has recently been discarded as impractical and the teachers again have the switch hand. Funny they can't apply that experience to adult life too—and gradually they are.

Some of Sovietland's social services dwarf the recent social achievements of any other country in the world. Education is being well done, all things considered. In spite of any fault one may find with their ideas on child culture, one cannot but admire the attention being given to children and young people in the Soviet Union.

In Moscow you will sense more keenly than anywhere else the resolve to establish a new manner of life, to build a new society on the principles of Karl Marx; but feel it you will everywhere. Among the good things accomplished must be cited the fact that higher education is not all centered in Leningrad and Moscow, as it was under the tzars, that children are paid for going to school, that a high-school education is soon to be made compulsory—in fact, the Soviet Union has just opened a school for clowns, a three-year course which includes foreign languages and other cultural subjects we mere capitalists do not associate with the sawdust ring.

But the Soviet rulers do not hesitate to use discrimination, the firing-squad, even starvation, if necessary, to bring about the same end toward which their childish forms of propaganda and their ultra-modern social services are striving. It is difficult to reconcile their advanced formulas with practices unknown in any other civilized country—the medieval, old-Chinese custom of punishing the whole family, women, children, and grandmothers, for the alleged crimes of one member of it, on whom perhaps they cannot lay their hands, the visiting of the sins of the father upon the sons and daughters of kulaks, priests, nobility, merchants, all the “exploiters” of the old régime, in the form of disfranchisement, if nothing worse.

You could gather whole volumes of short stories of abuses which even to a Bolshevik mind must seem unjustifiable. For instance, a man was asked to keep his business going until the State could take it over. While doing so he paid high taxes. Finally he was told that he must pay many more thousands of “gold”

rubles for the two years he had carried on by request of the State, on the ground that his business had been under-valued by the government appraisers when they levied the taxes he had been paying. The business would not by any means cover the increased taxation. So the man gave the whole shooting-match to the State, free gratis for nothing—and a few days later he was informed that the appraisers had revalued his business again, *at the same amount as one year's back taxes*, and that therefore he must pay the back taxes for the other year he had been keeping the business in operation. He couldn't, so now he is serving two years in a prison camp.

A youth was fined for an automobile accident, and sent to a prison camp when he could not pay the fine, which is quite as it should be. But after great effort his father gathered and borrowed and scraped together enough to pay the boy's fine—whereupon the father was charged with hoarding and sent to the same prison camp. Perhaps it was a special privilege for father and son to enjoy their incarceration together. I wouldn't know that. Anyhow, I am only musing.

How big a majority has Stalin & Company, if any? An ex-American I met—yes, there are ex-Americans too—fed up with Soviet ways, yet admitting there are plenty of good points about the Stalin régime, thinks probably fifty per cent are in favor of the present system. Another, an unmitigated sorehead, insists that not five per cent would vote in its favor if they had a free, fearless suffrage and that the Red Army will revolt or quit whenever a war with a foreign power breaks out. The Government in all its manifestations,

down to Intourist guides, will tell you there are only a very small number of dissatisfied and irreconcilables left. So there you are. Yo' pays yo' money an' yo' takes yo' choice.

"Elections" in Russia are of course no elections at all. Only the most ludicrous fraction of the 160,000,000 or so have any say in the Government. Manual, or at least industrial, workers just now occupy a peculiarly exalted position, as far as any effective suffrage goes. The workmen of the cities have five times as much power as the peasants; that is, it takes five times as many peasants to send a representative to the high Soviet Council as it does industrial workers. Oh, well, hasn't the city always ruled the country even under the capitalistic system?

There are twenty-three trade (?) unions, including teachers, artists, and writers. There are some sixty "Trests," self-contained government monopolies that deal with one another just as independent "trusts" do in a capitalistic society, but turn their profits over to the Government—or if they have no profit to turn over they tell the reason why, perhaps in the GPU back-yard. One man, it seems, can start a business—though he must not of course compete with government enterprises—if he runs it himself. But if he hires some one to help him he is "exploiting labor" and falls foul of one of Bolshevism's pet aversions. Apparently not even partnerships are allowed. Think of the strikes and quarrels and lawsuits those simple taboos do away with!

It is a waste of breath to try to make the subjects of Stalin believe that millions of American workers pay

no direct taxes whatsoever. In Sovietland every worker is taxed two per cent of his wages for union dues, eight per cent as income tax, ten per cent (sometimes twice that) goes as a forced loan to the Government, and some such amount as a "voluntary" contribution to aviation, the Red Army, a building association, or something of the sort. So the thousand-ruble salary of the engineer, for instance, shrinks in practice to seven or even six hundred. Of course we did more or less the same thing during the War, and those who rule the USSR contend that their present emergency is as real as war.

Many persons in the United States are said to be losing sleep over Communist propaganda and agitation directed and financed from Moscow. It is only fair to remind them that probably more persons in the Soviet Union entertain the same fear about capitalistic propaganda and the infiltration of actual capitalism from the United States—and past experiences in many a backward country give them at least equally as good reasons to dread capitalistic tricks as we have to fear Communist knavery.

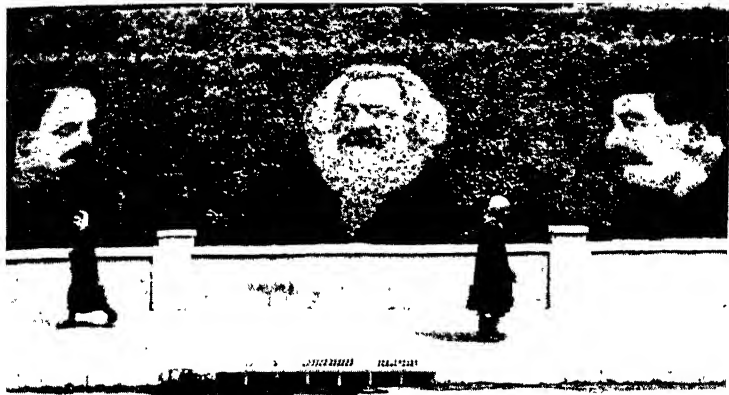
The Bolshevik is panicky. He imagines the whole outside world is constantly plotting to overthrow his system of society. I have said that the Russians are a friendly people, especially toward "guests." Yet there is an aloofness and reserve about the attitude of the great majority of Russians in dealing with foreigners, perhaps especially with Americans, which is significant. Most Russians simply do not associate with us, except



when required to officially or because there is *valuta* in it. Many of them would as soon call on a typhus patient as on a foreigner. I got the distinct impression that any one from "capitalistic" America is suspected, and this right down to the very waiters and chambermaids accustomed to working among foreign visitors. There is evidently a widespread fear of being charged by the GPU with "fraternizing with the enemy."

Comfort is a luxury in the Soviet Union and true Soviet-patriots despise luxury as a wickedness of capitalistic society, just as the simplicity of their courts and other institutions, even the sometimes affected sloppiness of their attire, is obviously a revolt against the rigid formalism of the tzarist régime. Europe is revolting against the American ideal of comfort, anyway. One of Mussolini's slogans is "We must not be too comfortable." I am not at all sure they are not right—comfort against thinking, which gives us our tired-businessmen shows, our inane talkies, our silly radio programs, the alleged "funnies" in our newspapers, which nauseate most of continental Europe. In place of these things the Soviet authorities are offering improvement of the mind, even if it is only by studying the works of Marx, Lenin, Engels, by workers' meetings, lectures, and reading. It is their contention that instead of eating well one should acquire more culture by attending theater or opera, which emphasize Soviet art but do not often include bourgeois masterpieces—though under the impetus of Stalin himself the good things of the past are beginning to have their place in the sun, or at least in the spotlight, again.

Moscow is the hub whence emanate all decrees,



Kiev Is by no Means the Only Soviet City That Displays Flower Portraits of Lenin, Marx, and Stalin.



Dentists and Patients All Happened That Morning to Be Women in the Big Free Dental Clinic in Kharkov's Best Hospital.



She Pauses to Gaze in Awe (?) at  
Sevastopol's Imposing Bronze Lenin.

Lenin Stands in Bronze on a Symbolically  
High Pedestal All Over the Soviet Union.

ideas, even food and life itself. Moscow has the whip-hand and draws no distinction among Tartar, Mongol, Georgian, Ukrainian, Armenian, Jew, and all the rest of the population of the Soviet Union. Such centralized control has so standardized, or at least is trying so hard to standardize, the lives of the 160,000,000 or so that they eat, dress, and practically think alike. Any deviation from this standard can only come from an individual more clever than the Soviets who run local affairs, one who lives an inner life while looking Red on the surface—in other words a “radish.”

The confirmed Communist of Sovietland is sincere and hard-working. He sacrifices willingly every day for his Government, for “the good of the majority,” something most of us hesitate to do so often. Some, especially those born or matured since 1917, are fanatical Communists, and through every stratum of Soviet society runs more or less the thought that they are the leaders and the last hope of the world to-day and that on their example and success will depend the success of the world proletariat in overthrowing the “toppling capitalistic nations.” In passion for a cause, Bolshevism is a religion, and the missionary spirit is almost as fervent as that of the Moslems in their fanatic prime.

There is a crusader spirit that is ready to resort to rather ruthless means even in small matters. We were strolling along the beach at Batum when a boy suddenly began to howl. A man had hit him in the back with a stone. When my companion asked why, the man answered, “He said a bad word and I want to cure him of such things while he is young.” It had not oc-

curred to him that kindness *might* bring more results, for compassion is not the Soviet *modus operandi*. Moscow would make the rest of the world adopt her panacea even if she has to hit us in the back with a stone to do so. Well, we still send a few missionaries out to the "heathen." But why doesn't Moscow adopt our attitude toward her—of letting us stew in our own juice? If she were wiser, older, less naïve, she would, and gradually, I think, she is adopting that attitude.

For at present Moscow is too busy with her own problems to worry as much as she once did about revolutionizing the world. Russia is still no Utopia. Many in the Soviet Union are dissatisfied, and Moscow knows it, even if she does not openly admit it. But make no mistake: Bolshevism has come to stay in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Sovietland's only fear or doubt as to the ultimate success of her plan is a foreign war, that the rest of the world will combine to overthrow her form of society lest Communism spread, as some of it is bound to spread unless the Bolshevik régime is overthrown. For Russia is an experimental garden, and some of the things it develops will in time be imported by even the most conservative and old-fashioned gardeners.

## CHAPTER XVII

### COMING HOME

*Escape from the Soviets . . . It's Different in Poland  
 . . . Conclusion—If Any* \*

IT was raining when I came to Kiev; it rained every morning there, a pouring, ardent rain, followed by brilliant sunshine from about ten o'clock on, by special arrangement, I suppose, of Intourist for its "guests." On the day I left, it poured until late in the afternoon, and by that time Kiev was far behind. We had been herded to the station in a rollicking bus at 10:30, sat in the restaurant-waiting-room until the 12:18 train came in at 12:45, and left with that hardly half an hour later. But a haircut and a shine in the station barber shop at a total of one ruble eighty, including smile-provoking tips, helped to pass the time and to emphasize one poignant regret at leaving Sovietland. Good-by to "guides," to bouncing Russian buses, to "free" meals and interminable waiting, and to freedom from all the annoyances of bargaining with porters and taxicabs and the guardians of hotel rooms.

Rain; black fertile soil; mud; rain and abounding fertility; collective farms, with women up to their bare calves in them, for a long way west of Kiev. Finally a lighter soil and the rain gradually changing to sunshine not long before that gave way to darkness.

By that time we were standing on the cement floor of the custom-house at Shepetovka. Delightful weather outside at last, perhaps an interesting town, at least an ardent longing to take a walk after sitting all day. But we continued to stand by the hour on the hard cement floor of the custom-house, until its red and white squares were indelibly stamped in our memories. Perhaps it was so we would be sure to memorize also the slogan painted in boxcar letters high on the plaster beams of the ceiling, in Russian, German, French and English, "PROLETARIAT OF ALL LANDS, UNITE!" "How to Torture Travelers" would be a better slogan at Shepetovka.

But the customs men were very pleasant indeed when finally they noticed that we were there and got busy. Pleasant, but adamant. One American couple had to leave behind twenty-eight of their thirty-three dollars, because their entry receipt credited them with only five dollars. Yes, the officials could see that they had evidently cashed a fifty-dollar traveler's check from the five hundred in their checkbook. Yes, that five hundred had been duly entered in their entry receipt. But . . . they should have a statement from the bank that cashed the check. The bank's fault for not telling them? Perhaps. But the law is . . .

The argument was long and furious, broken now and then by the scream of some lady tourist as a soldier ruthlessly unrolled the undeveloped films unearthed from her baggage. But the end was what every one except the victims foresaw—the \$28 remained in the USSR. *Valuta* is *valuta*, and Sovietland craves it mightily. Besides, come to see both sides of the ques-

tion, that fifty-dollar check might have been hidden or sent home in a letter—even Communists cannot examine them all—or destroyed and the loss recovered later, and the \$28 might have been entrusted to them by a friend in order to get it out of the country.

Locked in an aged third-class Russian car and in charge of the "smallpox squad," a GPU soldier whose face was a warning to anti-vaccinationists, we bumped back and forth through the night over forty kilometers of neutral territory until ten, when a big Pole in lots of uniform and more cap and oozing formality took over the wardenship and came through collecting passports. There were six men of us: an American, an American Jew, a Russian-American, a Ukrainian-Canadian, a Hungarian, and a Czech whose gorgeous accordion helped us to endure our imprisonment and the incredible dawdling and incomprehensible switching back and forth of that miserable and almost empty train until we reached Zdolbunow at midnight—in plenty of time to take the 10:35 express to Warsaw.

But first we must submit to a racket the Poles have developed, displeased, I suppose, at not getting more out of the hordes of Intourist "guests" who use their country only as an exit. Polish customs men, absurdly overdressed to our now Russianized eyes, daintily wearing gloves, rummaged through our belongings until they came to some trinket purchased in the Soviet Union, whereupon they shrieked "dutiable" and other minions pounced upon the offending baggage and carried it off. They took two hard-earned dollars from me for sending a six-pound package of toys and trifles in bond across Poland, then seemed to think better of



it and brought me back a handful of zloty change, which the porter demanded as a tip for "his" trouble. The Czech's accordion was accorded the same privilege. It doesn't seem to matter much to the Poles what they find dutiable, so long as they get a contribution from each transit passenger.

But, after all, accordion-playing would have been very much out of place on that Polish express, heavy with the inhibitions of western Europe and the capitalistic world at large. In Russia it takes two or three minutes to establish complete understanding with your fellow-travelers, at least in a "hard wagon." In Poland, in almost all western Europe, except Spain, people sit all day or all night rubbing knees in the same compartment and never give a sign that conversation or even a conviction of mutual dislike exists. Our Polish fellow-passengers were lofty, suspicious, aloof, eying us with that English air of calculating, "Now, am I of higher social caste than you, or vice versa?" In such matters Communism is a gain; it knocks down innumerable silly artificial barriers.

The first few hours after your escape from a strange country recall by contrast things you hardly saw there or have already forgotten out of familiarity. We were reminded by the constant saluting in Poland that no one ever seems to salute in Sovietland. Gloves, we suddenly remembered, are unknown there, at least in summer. There are no dogs on leashes, few dogs at all in the cities, no fancy uniforms and the pompous manners that go with them, no ten or fifteen per cent "service" charge to upset your economizing. The Poles

are as fond of a uniform as our black brethren in Alabama. Polish soldiers were haughty instead of comradely and naïve and one of the people, students vainglorious for no visible reason.

A Polish woman entered our compartment during the night. How our Russian-American companion managed to get into conversation with her is a mystery:

"Are you working?" I heard him ask.

"*Working!* What do you mean? I am married."

It would not be the answer at all in the Soviet Union.

"You should give me that corner seat," she wheedled.

"Why?" The question was natural after a Russian sojourn. "You are only going to —; I am going all the way to Warsaw."

"Yes, but I am a *lady*."

We had forgotten that outside the USSR the fair sex expects favors for the mere accident of sex.

You enjoy the new, clean, well-equipped train and its spotless toilets, with even a stopper for the wash-basins—though still no toilet paper—the very brief stops at stations, the decent speed and few whistles between them, the benches which admit that the human back is curved. But you miss the long individual shelves of Russian trains, resent the eight people to a compartment, so that you must sit up and catch only snatches of broken and cramped sleep now and then during the night. The Poles put on such a hurt air at having to sit up all night, don't make minor hardships a comradely lark as the Russians do.

Daylight disclosed a rolling, happier-looking land, pretty, almost beautiful landscapes after days across endless steppes, no collective farming but better-tended fields, more homelike thatched cottages. In contrast again, in Poland you see many advertisements, "For Rent" and "For Sale" signs, lots of cattle, people hurrying to big churches—for it was Sunday, right on top of a Red Sunday in Sovietland the day before.

Warsaw was a well-stocked, well-built, prosperous city, overrun with signs of the private wealth we had almost forgotten exists—and commonplace and uninteresting compared with any Russian city. The cinemas offered you the antics of Europe's favorite movie clowns, *Flip i Flap* (Laurel and Hardy to you). Greasy-looking Jews in comic caps and long curls at the temples swarmed in and about the ghettos—Jews are Jews in Poland, but only part of the population in the Soviet Union. The Russian and Polish languages are so much alike that one accosted a stranger with, "Tovarish—I beg your pardon—I mean Guspadin . . ." Comfort—and boredom; discomfort and enthusiasm, the ardor of crusaders, pioneers working the future, hence no ennui.

Train chaos in Russia must be due to the Russian temperament. For in Warsaw, long a part of Russia, everything was orderly and on time; the trainmen had the same air and manners, seats were as plentiful as in Germany or the United States. But perhaps our trains would be long and ponderous and slow if we guaranteed every passenger room to lie down. Why such mobs traveling all over the Soviet Union and so few

travelers in Poland, where prosperity is so much more in evidence and there is apparently no passport control inside the country?

I got the impression in Kiev and some of the other cities toward the end of my Russian tour that the stores were fairly well stocked. Familiarity breeds false notions, I suppose. For in Warsaw, and especially when window-shopping on Unter den Linden and Friedrichstrasse in Berlin, I realized more than when I was there how little can be bought in the USSR, thousands of the simple little things we take for granted, as well as many necessities. What Sovietland needs is a few five-and-ten-cent stores—selling among other things rolls of paper.

Much happier-looking fields, as I have said, in Poland; still better cultivated fields in Germany, even if the women are still working in them, more completely, more lovingly tended, from homes that make Sovietland seem a land of mere shelters. Our proud engine from Berlin to Hamburg can do a hundred and forty kilometers, ninety miles, an hour, according to the alert engine-driver in spotless blue cap peering out of his cab for the signal to be off on the dot—and we almost reached that speed. One of Germany's new types of train sped past us like a shining meteor. I wonder what a Russian trainman would take it to be.

There are far more differences between Moscow and Hamburg than between Hamburg and New York. After a month in Sovietland it is almost a shock to be home again, even to read American papers, to know that thousands are hungry and hopeless while sons and daughters of "go-getting" Americans squander for-

tunes on whims, have no more serious interest in life than tennis, polo, and the playgrounds of Society. You almost long to be back in a country where at least there is no wanton display or showy waste, no "Canine Caterers" driving limousine delivery wagons past dull-eyed men on park benches, no advertising rubbish filling the air, a country where with all its faults the general atmosphere is one of seriousness of life and earnest endeavor, not always for your own precious self.

I have gone abroad twelve times since 1900, sometimes for as much as four years at a time. I have spent a total of 5,364 days, say 14.7 years, of my life outside my native country; I have seen most of the countries on this earth, some of them thoroughly, and I am inclined to say that the month I spent in the Soviet Union was the most interesting thirty-one days of all my travels, at least with the thrills of early youth subtracted. It is a fascinating sight, a real privilege to see an immense, semi-primitive land in the act of attempting to raise itself, in a fraction of the time it took the Western world to rise to its present status, from medievalism to what it fondly hopes is to be the world of the future. You may agree with nothing, you may agree with everything the Soviets are trying to accomplish—though if you are normal you will most likely hover somewhere about halfway between those two exaggerations. But if a month in the Soviet Union doesn't make you think, then you will have absolute proof either that you have not yet reached the stage of cerebration or that your mental arteries are hope-

lessly hardened—and to know that is surely worth the cost in money and minor hardships of a trip to Russia.

I don't often go back. I rarely revisit a foreign country, unless it lies underfoot on my way to somewhere else; because life is short and the world is large—well, at least there are a lot of countries in it. But I think I would rather go back to the Soviet Union next summer than visit some part of the world I have not seen. I want to see what progress they make in a year in their very interesting, if to many people their more or less malevolent, experiment in human relations. I want to ask at least ten thousand questions I have thought of since I left there. I want to ask how they reconcile . . .

But if I begin that I'll have to write another book, and surely you would not have me do that.



## AFTERTHOUGHT

### TO THOSE WHO ARE NOT EASILY DISCOURAGED:

*If after reading the foregoing tale of parlor hardships you would still like to see Russia before it has all been made over, then the following hints may prove useful:*

*Travel third or "special category," as the Russians call it (\$5 a day) if your purse, like mine, is thin and if you want lots of local color and contacts.*

*Travel second or "tourist" class if you do not have to count your dollars too closely (about \$8 a day). You will have a little more comfort and plenty of chances to observe "Ivan" at close range.*

*Travel first class if money is no object and you want the very best the Soviet Union can provide (about \$15 a day). You may then eat caviar three times a day, have first choice of guides and the inestimable privilege in a classless society of looking down your nose at us "special category" commoners.*

*Travel light—two bags at the most, perferably one. Carry a few dollar bills in small denominations and plenty of dimes and nickels for tips, perhaps even a few quarters, but take anything more than that in travelers' checks. Take your own towel, soap, toilet paper, and plenty of films.*

*If you want still more light on this dark subject, just write me in care of my publisher and if I haven't the information you want I know where I can get it for you, within limits.*









